

**Between a Rock and a Hard Place:  
Herbert Marcuse, the Frankfurt School and the West German Student Movement**

Kirkland Alexander Fulk

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literature.

Chapel Hill  
2008

Approved by:

Dr. Richard Langston

Dr. Anna Parkinson

Dr. Eric Downing

## Abstract

Kirkland Alexander Fulk: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Herbert Marcuse, the Frankfurt School and the West German Student Movement*  
(Under the direction of Dr. Richard Langston)

This thesis examines the tension between Marcuse, the Frankfurt School and the West German student movement focusing primarily on Marcuse's controversial essay "Repressive Tolerance" and its repercussions. Marcuse's 1965 essay both personifies his radical politics and provides a link to his Heideggerian background, thus incorporating his radical political stance with his radical philosophy. What was Marcuse actually saying in this treatise? How did the students misunderstand it? Further, how does this essay represent the longstanding tension between Marcuse and his Frankfurt School colleagues? The first chapter will provide a critical analysis of "Repressive Tolerance" and the subsequent dialogues between both Marcuse and the students and Marcuse and Horkheimer and Adorno. The second chapter reaches to the roots of Marcuse's theory. Does "Repressive Tolerance" contain traces of Marcuse's Heideggerian heritage and if so how does this aid our understanding of Marcuse's philosophy and his relationship with these two competing groups?

## Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations.....	iv
Chapter	
I.    (Re)Reading “Repressive Tolerance” .....	1
Introduction: The Frankfurt School in the 1960s.....	1
Freedom, Utopia and the Revolutionary Subject.....	5
Revolutionary vs. Reactionary Violence.....	16
The Students’ Call for Violence.....	22
Conclusion.....	27
II.    The Return to Heidegger or Marcuse: Left Heideggarian?.....	29
Introduction: Marcuse, Heidegger and the Frankfurt School.....	29
“Über konkrete Philosophie” and “Repressive Tolerance” .....	35
The Frankfurt School and the Student Movement Revisited.....	52
Areas for Further Research.....	63
Bibliography.....	65

## List of Abbreviations

- CM* Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- CT* Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
- DA* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1988).
- DR* Rudi Dutschke, *Die Revolte: Wurzeln und Spuren eines Aufbruchs*, eds. Gretchen Dutschke, Jürgen Miermeister und Jürgen Treulieb (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983).
- EFS* Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1982).
- FL* Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
- FSS* Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail 1946-1995*, vol. 2: *Dokumente*, vol. 3: *Aufsätze und Kommentar Register* (. Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard Verlag, 1998).
- HC* Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- HM* Herbert Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, Richard Wolin and John Abromeit, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
- JA* Theodor W. Adorno, *Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
- MLM* Rudi Dutschke, *Mein langer Marsch: Reden, Schriften und Tagebücher aus zwanzig Jahren*, eds. Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz, Helmut Gollwitzer und Jürgen Miermeister (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980).
- ND* Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975).
- NG* Herbert Marcuse, *Nachgelassene Schriften Bd. 4: Die Studentenbewegung und ihre Folgen*, ed. Peter-Erwin Jansen (Hamburg: Klampen Verlag, 2004).
- “RT” Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr. and Herbert Marcuse, 81-117 (Boston: Beacon, 1965).
- “ÜkP” Herbert Marcuse, “Über konkrete Philosophie,” in *Schriften Bd. 1: Der deutsche Künstlerroman, Frühe Aufsätze*, 385-406 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978).

## (Re)Reading Repressive Tolerance

### Introduction: The Frankfurt School in the 1960s

The 1960s have attained a mythical status in the history of West Germany. Social upheaval in the form of student protest rocked the German political stage in the post-fascist Federal Republic of Germany. The generation of students born after the collapse of the Third Reich openly challenged what they thought to be the imperialist policies of America, the Vietnam War and the perceived persistence of fascism in West Germany. The relative quiet of the immediate post-war years consumed by rebuilding a demolished Germany, rebuilding through consumption and attaining a new national identity through the promise of new consumer goods, was shattered by the onslaught of student protest, which violently erupted in the streets of West Germany. Amidst the protest banners of marching students and the water cannons of the police, there existed a philosophical undercurrent to the protests. Far from being a disenfranchised and disillusioned horde of protestors, the students sought a social and philosophical foundation for their revolt. This is not to say that the student movement operated as a cohesive unit; there were of course numerous student groups and organizations, which often acted independently of each other. There is, however, one theoretical red thread that runs through the student movement, namely the Frankfurt School.

The works of Adorno, Horkheimer and especially Herbert Marcuse witnessed a veritable renaissance during the 1960s. Their essays on authoritarian institutions, fascism,

culture and society found a new audience among members of the student movement. As Douglas Kellner claims, "...their works had radicalized many young students, and they helped create an environment in which radical theory and politics could thrive" (CT 210). Kellner's statement is not only testament to the importance of the Frankfurt School to the student movement, but also the reverse; the student movement was crucial in reviving the earlier works of the Frankfurt School and carrying on the tradition of critical theory in the 1960s and beyond. Adorno and Horkheimer realized the importance and necessity of their earlier works when writing to Marcuse in 1962 about a possible new edition of their classic *Dialektik der Aufklärung*:

...so bleibt es doch wahr, dass vieles von dem, was wir daran angefangen haben, weitergetrieben werden müsste. Wir bilden uns auch ein, dass wir manches besser wissen und sagen könnten als vor zwanzig Jahren, da wir das Buch zu schreiben begannen (FSS 2: 156).

This remark made at the beginning of the 1960s is, however, hardly representative of Horkheimer and Adorno's later position on the student movement and its interest in their works. Horkheimer was cautious of allowing many of his earlier works to be republished. Though in 1967 he did allow a German translation of *Eclipse of Reason*, he felt it necessary to preface the edition, warning of the danger of blind action and denunciation over the protection and preservation of freedom (Wiggershaus 625). Still, other works he refused to republish, fearing the radical adoption of their ideas by the student movement. Adorno as well refused to discuss many of his earlier ideas with the students. He expressed discomfort with even lecturing to the students at the university and preferred instead a "neutralen Ort" (FSS 2: 156). In June 1967, when he did in fact appear before the Berlin students, who wanted a discussion on the "Brandstiftertext der 'Kommune I'," Adorno declined and continued with his lecture on classicism in Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (Briegleb 114).

The later works of Horkheimer and Adorno were arguably devoid of radical social critique. As Douglas Kellner points out, in Adorno's 1966 book *Negative Dialektik* the importance of social theory and politics in general receded "in favor of philosophical theory and critique" (CT 209-10). The opening lines to this work signal not only Adorno's return to "pure" philosophical thought, but also the reason why he felt this was necessary:

Philosophie, die einmal überholt schien, erhält sich am Leben, weil der Augenblick ihrer Verwirklichung versäumt ward. Das summarische Urteil, sie habe die Welt bloß interpretiert, sei durch Resignation vor der Realität verkrüppelt auch in sich, wird zum Defaitismus der Vernunft, nachdem die Veränderung der Welt misslang (ND 15).

Adorno attacks the "Defaitismus der Vernunft" leveled against philosophy once it failed to offer a concrete solution or moreover failed to change the world. Philosophy, according to Adorno, was in need of a revival precisely *because* it missed its moment of realization (*Verwirklichung*). His emphasis on the value of philosophy over a concrete social theory that in the end failed to present new possibilities clashed with a rebellious student body looking for substantive direction, a theory for praxis. Although their thought increasingly shifted away from the concrete social analyses that characterized their previous work, Adorno and Horkheimer were nonetheless important figures for the student movement, if not merely for their earlier works such as "The End of Reason" and "The Authoritarian Personality" (Wiggershaus 624).

While Adorno and Horkheimer, in their later works, moved their social theories deeper into "pure" philosophy, Marcuse continued his vehement critique of modern society. Further, more so than his colleagues, his works had a direct impact on the student movement. As Rudi Dutschke, the charismatic leader of the student movement, asserted:

...erörtern und reflektieren wir die Diskussion, die von der Frankfurter Schule geführt wurden, speziell von Herbert Marcuse, der in den sechziger Jahren der einzige bedeutende politische Theoretiker war (DR 170).

Unlike his colleagues, Marcuse did not shy away from engaging and interacting with the students nor did he decline to discuss the possibilities of revolution. This made him one of the most outspoken and controversial figures of his time, both in relation to Horkheimer and Adorno, and to the students. One of the most controversial of Marcuse's works is his essay "Repressive Tolerance." His essay's stance on the concepts of censorship, revolution and violence placed him in a precarious position between the student movement and the remaining members of the Frankfurt School. "Repressive Tolerance," Douglas Kellner states, "...violat[ed] the academic taboo of neutrality" in its espousal of intolerance toward the ideas of the Right and increased tolerance to those of the Left (*CM* 281-2). This loss of critical distance, to which Horkheimer and Adorno adhered throughout their careers, was not only heretical in their eyes, but also threatened to place them in the same camp as Marcuse; they feared guilt by association. For the students, as radical as Marcuse's essay was, it fell short on three grounds: 1) it denied talk of a "positive utopia"; 2) it failed to name them the revolutionary successor to the proletariat; and 3) it did not offer a revolutionary solution after the movement's violent turn.

The following chapter will deal especially with this, as Richard Lichtman rightly states, "largely neglected" work by Herbert Marcuse (Pippin et. al. 189). The first section will address Marcuse's notions of freedom, utopia and the revolutionary subject. The second section will deal with the most controversial of Marcuse's ideas, revolutionary violence. I will sketch the intellectual history of this controversial work placing it in dialog not only with the students, Horkheimer, and Adorno, but also with Marcuse's lectures to the Berlin students. After a close reading of "Repressive Tolerance," I will demonstrate that Marcuse's essay does not succumb to logical pitfalls and inner contradictions, as Richard Lichtman also



suggests, but is well aware of its philosophical and pragmatic limitations. The following chapter will show that while many of Marcuse's theories echoed those of his Frankfurt School colleagues, namely his theory of utopia and the pedagogical importance of critical theory, his theory of violence exposed him to harsh criticism from both the students and his colleagues. "Repressive Tolerance" thus represents the controversy and confusion surrounding Marcuse in the 1960s and places him in limbo between the students and his former colleagues. On the one hand, Marcuse did not provide a solution to the revolutionary problems of the students. On the other, Marcuse's public role with the student movement, his willingness to engage it on such topics as revolution, pushed his relationship with Horkheimer and Adorno to the brink. Marcuse found himself in a precarious position during the 1960s, trapped between two groups at either end of a theoretical spectrum. His dilemma was that he was too radical for his colleagues in the Frankfurt School, while the students found his theories inadequate. The conditions for this bind are twofold, namely his radical politics and his philosophical roots.

### Freedom, Utopia and the Revolutionary Subject

"Repressive Tolerance" appeared alongside two other essays dealing with the subject of tolerance from Barrington Moore, Jr. and Robert Paul Wolff in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Although the original English version first appeared in 1965, it was not until a year later, the same year as the publication of Adorno's *Negative Dialektik*, that a German translation appeared. To the students, Marcuse's call for revolution (no longer avoiding this term as he did in *The One-Dimensional Man*) and slanted tolerance toward the Left was a

virtual call to arms (Dekoven 27). The latter especially became important when, in late 1967, amidst cries of “Enteignet Springer,” the students called for an end to the tabloid mogul Axel Springer. Although “Repressive Tolerance” seemed to be the answer to many of the students’ questions about revolution, it caused, in fact, more problems than it solved.

Marcuse wastes little time establishing the core of his treatise in “Repressive Tolerance.” He states his conclusion, in fact, in the opening paragraph of his essay:

...the realization of the objective of tolerance would call for *intolerance* toward prevailing policies, attitudes, opinions, and the extension of tolerance to policies, attitudes, and opinions which are outlawed or suppressed (“RT” 81, my italics).

For Marcuse, the idea of tolerance of speech granted to both sides of the political spectrum, Left and Right, only perpetuates the existing state of affairs, offering no hope for alternatives. This concept of “universal tolerance,” where every utterance is given equal weight and is “practiced by the rulers as well as by the ruled, by the lords as well as by the peasants, by the sheriffs as well as by their victims,” is an illusion (“RT” 84). Tolerance, “as an end in itself,” as “universal,” is constrained by certain preconditions. “And such universal tolerance is possible,” Marcuse asserts, “only when no real or alleged enemy requires in the national interest the education and training of people in military violence and destruction”; in short, only where peace reigns and there is no need for violence is universal tolerance possible (“RT” 84). Such utopian conditions for universal tolerance are non-existent, making tolerance a means to an end, a means that is in the hands of the ruling class.

Under the prevailing conditions, where violence and suppression not only exist but are legalized, and society is ruled by the “predominant interests” of the privileged and their “connections,” a different form of tolerance exists. Marcuse calls this form “abstract” or “pure” tolerance (“RT” 85). Pure tolerance, since it does not fulfill the required social

preconditions of universal tolerance, is de facto limited. The failures, or inherent flaws, of pure tolerance are twofold: 1) it passively tolerates “entrenched and established attitudes and ideas even if their damaging effect on man and nature is evident” and 2) it grants official tolerance to “the Right as well as the Left, to movements of aggression as well as to movements of peace, to the party of hate as well as to that of humanity” (“RT” 85). In allowing free expression to the ideas of the Left and Right alike, pure tolerance lends credibility to that which is damaging and destructive to humanity. The deceptive impartiality of pure tolerance “which serves to minimize intolerance and suppression...is false...and this kind of tolerance inhuman” (“RT” 98). It is not the curtailment of intolerance and suppression that renders pure tolerance so dangerous, but that in so doing, the illusion is created that both sides are equally weighted, thus only furthering the prevailing domination.

For Marcuse, however, the two sides, right and wrong, good and evil, true and false are not equal. The party of hate, movements of aggression, and the Right, should not have the same status as their opposites. Information and influence should be slanted in the direction of the opposite, peace, humanity and the Left (“RT” 99). Only through this “unfair” distribution of information toward that which is good can individuals break through the barrier of the “neutrality” of facts and become autonomous, “find[ing] by themselves what is true and what is false.” “They would have to be freed,” Marcuse continues, “from the prevailing indoctrination (which is no longer recognized as indoctrination)” but as tolerance (“RT” 98). But what is freedom for Marcuse? What does freedom from the “prevailing indoctrination” mean?

Lichtman correctly touches on many of the inadequacies in Marcuse’s essay. He claims that many of Marcuse’s ideas are not fully developed or often contradictory. The

concepts of freedom, utopia, truth and the revolutionary subject are but a few of the concepts that need to be wrested from his analysis and placed back into their correct context. He contends that the issues of tolerance and intolerance are “difficult to assess” because “‘freedom’ itself is never adequately defined” (Pippin et. al.200). To some extent, this is true, but “Marcuse,” as Stephan Bundschuh asserts, “does not claim that his theory contains a complete description of what man, as a free species being, would look like” (Abromeit et. al. 158). Marcuse never explicitly states what freedom is or whether freedom can be defined. Rather, Marcuse defines freedom by way of negation. He confronts advanced capitalist concepts of freedom, “finding a compromise between competitors...between general and individual interest, common and private welfare,” with the idea of “creating the society in which man is no longer enslaved by institutions which vitiate self-determination (“RT” 87). Freedom for Marcuse is not only freedom from something, but freedom to do something. It is thus both the end of enslavement by institutions and the ability to determine one’s own course, not mediated by the prevailing institutions and what Adorno calls the *Kulturindustrie*. It is this concept of freedom that slanted tolerance can aid in creating. Tolerance in itself, in its non-universal form, is not freedom and neither is intolerance. Nevertheless, tolerance toward prevailing institutions that perpetuate slavery and a mediated existence can only be broken by slanted tolerance towards those ideas that extol the opposite, thereby opening the doorway to the possibility of freedom as defined above.

Lichtman further argues that Marcuse’s understanding of truth as the telos of liberty is also contradictory to John Stuart Mill’s idea of democratic tolerance. He quotes Mill, “we can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavoring to stifle is false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still” (Pippin et. al. 201). In positing this “fatal,

underlying defect of Marcuse's argument," Lichtman misses one key point in Marcuse's essay, namely the distinction between true and false:

But in a democracy with totalitarian organization, objectivity may fulfill a very different function, namely to foster a mental attitude which tends to obliterate the difference between true and false, information and indoctrination, right and wrong ("RT" 97).

According to Marcuse, decisions telling us what to think and how to act have already been made for us before we have a chance to think for ourselves. The dialectic has been shattered, resulting in a "neutralization of opposites," what Marcuse a year before termed "one-dimensionality" ("RT" 97). It is for this reason that Marcuse advocates intolerance to the prevailing ideas, which appear before us in "a newspaper, in the juxtaposition of gorgeous ads with unmitigated horrors, in the introduction and interruption of the broadcasting of facts by overwhelming commercials" ("RT" 97). It is not that slanted tolerance somehow presents the truth. Rather, it simply presents a different position than that promulgated and perpetuated by the authorities. In this sense then, increased tolerance towards alternative ideas is but the beginning of the realization of freedom and liberty. The possibility of this realization is one often misunderstood aspect of "Repressive Tolerance." In short, it is the possibility of a utopia.

Certainly, slanted tolerance towards the ideas of the Left represents progress on the road to achieving freedom and a utopian society. This progress is, however, Janus-faced. Being the dialectical thinker that he is, Marcuse argues that progress always contains its opposite, namely regression. Though it achieves "an increase in the scope of freedom and justice," it also brings about "a better and more equitable distribution of misery and oppression in a new social system - in one word: progress in civilization" ("RT" 107). Linear progress from one system to another always carries with it vestiges of the old.

Marcuse uses the French, Chinese and Cuban Revolutions as well as the English Civil Wars to demonstrate this point. Each of these movements, though ushering in a new social system, brought about misery and oppression. For the French Revolution it was The Terror and in China The Great Leap Forward. Justifiably, however, in each of these instances “it could be and was anticipated whether the movement would serve the revamping of the old order or the emergence of the new” (“RT” 108). Marcuse distinguishes between those revolutions “emanating from the ruling classes,” the collapse of the Roman Empire for example, and those initiated “from below” (“RT” 108). Though to be sure, he prefers the latter to the former, one should be cautious of aligning Marcuse’s statements with a clear vindication of revolution. After all, Marcuse is equally vehement in his critique of the liberal democratic values ushered in by the French Revolution as he is of the communist systems in both Russia and China.

The question then becomes: what makes this “new” order different or prevents it from regressing into old customs? Who decides in this new society what is true and false? Toward which ideas should tolerance be slanted? For Marcuse, the answer lies in a form of educational dictatorship. He shies away from any utopian idea of a new society governed strictly by the people. “The only authentic alternative and negation of dictatorship,” Marcuse argues, “would be a society in which ‘the people’ have become autonomous individuals .... Such a society does not yet exist anywhere” (“RT” 105). Until society reaches this point, those “‘in the maturity of [their] faculties’ everyone who has learned to think rationally and autonomously” must make the decisions (“RT” 106). Marcuse admits that this will result in the governing of the many by the few, but there is no other way out of the entanglement of

indoctrination. To Marcuse, dictatorship is not the problem, but rather the “tyranny of public opinion” that only an educational dictatorship can break (“RT” 106).

“Marcuse,” Lichtman states, “...cannot distinguish properly between the mere *replacement* of one system of power by another, and a possible *enlargement* in the accompanying sphere of discourse” (Pippin et. al. 200, author’s italics). The problem is not that Marcuse is unable to distinguish between the two, but that the one is contained within the other. The dialectic of replacement contains its opposite, an enlargement of previous conditions. As we have already seen, the revolutions that Marcuse champions were met with an equal regression into an “equitable distribution of misery and oppression” resulting in the need for an educational dictatorship to ensure against this and to decide which ideas should be granted more tolerance (“RT” 107). It is also for this reason that Marcuse does not offer a utopian vision of a new world. If this transition phase to freedom requires a dictatorship, educational or otherwise, prescribing a utopia is certainly contradictory. Moreover, as Marcuse states in the opening of “Repressive Tolerance,” “...at present, no power, no authority, no government exists which could translate liberating tolerance into practice...” (“RT” 81). Where Lichtman asserts, “this does not lead him to reject the necessity of exploring a possibly utopian solution,” the opposite is clearly the case (Pippin et. al. 198). Nowhere amidst Marcuse’s discussion of violent upheavals, undemocratic means and educational dictatorships does he describe utopian conditions.

The realization of freedom, the possibility of a utopia produced out of the prevailing social conditions of total domination, is likewise something that Horkheimer and Adorno are cautious to prescribe. In his 1940 essay “The Authoritarian State,” Horkheimer writes, “The materialist dialectic deals with the common, the bad, the transitory; every historical situation

contains the ideal but not explicitly. The identity of the ideal and reality is universal exploitation” (*EFS* 108). The realization, or even the idea of achieving a utopia in the present reality, serves only to perpetuate the status quo and the totalitarian system. For when such an ideal could be reached, it would not be the end of the totalitarian system, but mere acquiescence to the prevailing system. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, one of the main impediments to a utopian society is the culture industry and in particular film. “Schön ist,” they state, “was immer die Kamera reproduziert” (*DA* 157). The audience is swept up in beautiful visions of life while at the same time being denied their fulfillment. The disappointment that arises from this denial, that “Geboten wird nicht Italien, sondern der Augenschein, dass es existiert” is simultaneously quashed (*DA* 157). The promise of utopia, of the good life, as Horkheimer and Adorno claim, “zehrt vom Kreislauf, von der freilich begründeten Verwunderung darüber, dass die Mütter trotz allem immer noch Kinder gebären, die Räder immer noch nicht stillstehen” (*DA* 157). Like Horkheimer’s statement, the presentation of the ideal, of utopia, in the present reality perpetuates submission to the current conditions, which are anything but. The only alternative, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, is non-utopian representation of the world depicted by avant-garde art, literature and especially music, which portrays the fractured, dystopic nature of society, and contains the potential of bringing individuals to the realization that their happiness is illusion, their utopia, oppression.

Marcuse’s treatment of progress and utopia met with little criticism from Horkheimer and Adorno, whose own ideas on the subject were similar. This was not the case with the student movement. The students wanted something from Marcuse that he was unwilling to provide, namely a concrete notion of utopia and how this could be achieved. To be sure, he



speaks of a society free of violence, fear and misery, overall “freed from the repressive requirements of a struggle for existence in the interest of domination.” (“RT” 105). Such a society, however, does not exist. Echoing Horkheimer’s sentiment in “The Authoritarian State,” Marcuse states that he deals with the idea of utopia “*in abstracto* - abstraction not from the historical possibilities, but from the realities of the prevailing societies” (“RT” 105). Marcuse, however, is not a pessimist. That he believes freedom and liberty can be attained and should be striven for is testament to his faith in the possibility of a utopia. The prevailing conditions, however, the society in which the students live, is not one in which a utopia can be established (Abromeit et. al. 158). The society Marcuse offers as a replacement, characterized by a dictatorship of the educated, unequal tolerance and equitable redistribution of misery, is far from a utopia. To the students this became clear when, from July 9 - 12, 1967, Marcuse met with them in Berlin to deliver a series of lectures titled “Das Ende der Utopie.” Klaus Briegleb renders the scene as such:

Die Zischlaute der Ungeduld und der Enttäuschung über nicht “positive Utopie” unter der Dreitausend im Auditorium maximum sind die Geräuschkulisse der stilleren Gespräche (116).

Far from praise and admiration, Marcuse’s notion of utopia, or lack thereof, was met with the hissing sounds of an impatient and disappointed group of students. This reaction revealed that the lack of this “positive Utopie” in “Repressive Tolerance” was something that the students hoped Marcuse would resolve during his speech. “In fact,” as Rolf Wiggershaus states, “so far as the expectations of the student opposition and particularly those of its leaders were concerned, Marcuse’s remarks fell far short in terms of concreteness appeal” (623-4). Though Marcuse felt that utopia, “eine Gesellschaft ohne Krieg, ohne Grausamkeit, ohne Brutalität...möglich ist,” the importance was not to prescribe such a society but to

determine how one achieves it (*FSS* 2: 281). That the transition phase was anything but “positive” disappointed the students.

The most misunderstood aspect of Marcuse for the students was their precise role in the overall “revolution.” Though he does not mention the students in “Repressive Tolerance,” understanding Marcuse’s view of them is crucial for understanding their reception and misconceptions of his essay. According to Marcuse, the students, along with African-Americans and other minorities, were the oppositional force; there was no other (*NS* 4: 113-4). They were not, however, the lost revolutionary subject, the replacement for the proletariat. During his speech at the Freie Universität Berlin on “Das Problem der Gewalt in der Opposition” on June 13, 1967, Marcuse states, “Zunächst darf ich noch einmal dem Mißverständnis vorbeugen, dass ich geglaubt hätte, die intellektuelle Opposition sei an sich schon eine revolutionäre Kraft oder die Hippies seien die Erben des Proletariats” (*FSS* 2: 274).<sup>1</sup> The students represented the power to break through the barricades surrounding Marcuse’s “one-dimensional” society, ushering in a new consciousness that, in turn, could produce the revolutionary subject (*FSS* 2: 476). “In society at large,” Marcuse asserts, “the mental space for denial and reflection must first be *recreated*” (“RT” 112, my italics). This re-creation of mental space, in connection with unequal tolerance towards destructive ideas, was the role of the students in the revolution. Though they were not the revolutionary subject in Marcuse’s eyes, they were the inheritors of dialectical, critical thought, which alone had the ability to “recreate” the possibility for revolution. Theirs was a revolution in thought. The revolution proper was in the hands of oppressed peoples of the third world; this

---

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the language in the speech is considerably different from that of the published lecture that appeared alongside four others in 1970 as *Five Lectures*. Here, Marcuse writes, “I have never said that the student opposition today is by itself a revolutionary force” (*FL* 93). This contrasts greatly with the German “intellektuelle Opposition.”

was the staging ground for the new class struggle, not West Germany in the late 1960s (Briegleb 116).

The extent to which even these national liberation fronts in third world countries were prepared to carry out such a revolution is, however, also questionable. In the same lecture to the Berlin students on the problem of violence, Marcuse assesses the situation of the true revolutionaries:

Selbst in den nationalen Befreiungsfronten der Entwicklungsländer können wir, glaube ich, heute noch keine effective revolutionäre Bedrohung des Systems des Spätkapitalismus sehen. Alle Oppositionskräfte wirken heute zur Vorbereitung, und nur zur Vorbereitung... (*FSS 2: 274*).

The revolutionaries of the third world, according to Marcuse, are themselves presently incapable of carrying out the revolution. The revolution is in a state of preparation that requires help from those within the repressive system they are fated to dismantle. One of the main impediments to their true revolution is that they are not unified with the opposition of these outsiders (*Außenseiter*) within the system. For Marcuse, these outsiders consist of both sides of an extreme, the privileged and the underprivileged:

In den Vereinigten Staaten sind es besonders die nationalen und rassischen Minoritäten, politisch noch weitgehend unorganisiert und untereinander antagonistisch...die zweite Gruppe, möchte ich wieder in zwei Unterabteilungen behandeln: erstens die sogenannte neue Arbeiterklasse...zweitens die Studentenopposition (*FSS 2: 273*).

In the United States, the students active participation not only in the, as Marcuse states, “poor districts” and “slums” but also talking to “housewives and, when they are there, their husbands” was crucial in awakening the “political consciousness of these districts” (*FL 91*).<sup>2</sup>

The task of the German students is similar. In his analysis of Marcuse, Douglas Kellner describes the oppositional nature of the German students as “characteristic of a state of

---

<sup>2</sup> Here the English has been quoted because this is noticeably missing from the German.

disintegration and thus indicates cracks in the system, a possible breaking through the continuum of domination; and [as] a catalyst for change which may play a revolutionary role in connection with other forces..." (CM 286). The working class, of which Marcuse speaks, is admittedly "das lieb Kind [sic] des bestehenden Systems" (FSS 2: 273). It is therefore up to the students, not only as outsiders in the system, but also as those in the possession of critical thought, to awaken the German working class to their oppositional potential. These are but the preconditions to a revolution. The alliance between these oppositional forces and the revolutionary subject of the third world is predicated by the reawakening of the political and oppositional thought of these unorganized or sleeping forces. Thus Wolfgang Fritz Haug raises the question of how "solche Begriffe" in the hands of the students can influence these third world revolutionaries; how these ideas "von außen" can be effective (Habermas ed. 52). To be sure, Marcuse does not have an answer for this. To solve this problem would be to posit a situation, which clearly does not exist. The students alone are not the oppositional force capable of influencing the revolutionaries in the developing countries. Only a unified oppositional front consisting of the students as well as those, what Marcuse terms, national and racial minorities can create a situation where the revolutionaries could indeed be brought to their true potential. Until the students succeed in awakening the other oppositional forces, such action is premature.

### Revolutionary vs. Reactionary Violence

"Repressive Tolerance" along with Marcuse's lectures center largely on revolutionary thought and the role of theory in the fight for a new society. Marcuse, however, does not

stop here. Theory is but one half of the revolutionary equation. Violence is the other. In light of Marcuse's view of the student movement as opposition not revolution, the question needs to be raised as to the role of violence in "Repressive Tolerance." Marcuse's espousal of violence and the necessity thereof makes this essay perhaps his most controversial (*CM* 283). Does Marcuse, as Horkheimer and Adorno fear, promote violence as a tool at the students' disposal? What was the students' view of Marcuse's analysis of violence? These two questions are at either end of a theoretical lever, the center of which Marcuse balances delicately. It is through the lens of Marcuse's discussion of violence as well as Horkheimer and Adorno's own works and correspondence with Marcuse that a clear picture of their opposition to the students and Marcuse himself comes to light. Moreover, the question will be raised as to the place of "Repressive Tolerance" in the students' discourse on violence.

Marcuse admits that freeing oneself from the established system of indoctrination in which the "predominant interests" mediate or level all dissenting facts and opinions a priori may require "undemocratic means" ("RT" 100). On the one hand, this means "a withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination, etc." ("RT" 100). On the other hand, removal of tolerance from these particular areas would mean revolution writ large "for they pertain to the basis on which the repressive affluent society rests and reproduces itself and its vital defenses" (RT 102). Presupposing such a revolutionary upheaval of the status quo, Marcuse adds violence to his equation as a way to reopen the blocked means to a subversive majority.

Marcuse is careful, though, to state that this violence is not to serve its perpetuation. His form of violence does not breed violence, as is the case with the prevailing institutions,

“the police, in the prisons and mental institutions, in the fight against racial minorities” (“RT” 102). Rather, it facilitates the dissolution of violence, a classic Marcuseian dialectical twist. Non-violence, according to Marcuse, is a strategy of the weak and, ultimately, does not succeed in dissolving the stranglehold of oppression. He cites, as the antithesis, the rebellion of Gandhi in India. In this case, the quantity of non-violent opposition becomes a violent quality. “On such a scale, passive resistance is no longer passive - it ceases to be non-violent” (“RT” 103). Further, Marcuse distinguishes between revolutionary and reactionary violence. In the latter, the oppressor uses violence on the oppressed, whereas in the former, the situation is reversed:

In terms of ethics, both forms of violence are inhuman and evil—but since when is history made in accordance with ethical standards? To start applying them at the point where the oppressed rebel against the oppressors, the have-nots against the haves is serving the cause of actual violence by weakening the protest against it (“RT” 103).

Thus, violence must be met with violence, power by an equal power. Where the established violence contends with anything other than opposing violence, the cause is lost. Non-violence only encourages the use of violence by opposing it in a weak and incompatible manner.

Marcuse’s support of violence as a necessary factor in the revolutionary equation is clearly at odds with the ideas of Horkheimer and Adorno. To the latter, violence, when materialized, is not an option. Rather, any possibility of altering the present repressive society hinges on education. Theirs is a pedagogical revolution. For Horkheimer, it is the stranglehold of instrumental rationality, which is an impediment to the realization of a peaceful society. “Today,” Horkheimer asserts in “The End of Reason,” “man needs factual knowledge, the automaton ability to react correctly, but he does need that quiet consideration of diverse possibilities which presupposes the freedom and leisure of choice” (*EFS* 39).

Where facts and calculable reaction patterns replace critical thought there is no room for what he terms, “aloof thinking” or “speculative thought” which contain the possibility of freedom (*EFS* 39). The only escape from this tyranny of facts, the domination of instrumental reason, is the “exploration of meanings.” In short, it requires the return of critical thought. Thus, Horkheimer is able to claim in “The Authoritarian State,” “Humanity is thoroughly educated and mutilated” (*EFS* 103). A process of reeducation is necessary, where the focus is not on the correct reaction to a set of facts or movements dictated by a machine, but the exploration of possibilities outside this realm of pre-prepared facts.

Adorno argues along the same lines in his 1951 essay “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda.” As the title already suggests, his essay does not deal with a violent physical revolution, but a revolt in the consciousness, against the state of facts that society, in this case Nazi Germany, presents. Adorno states from the outset that he is concerned with the masses, which have come under the spell of Nazi propaganda. He pits Freud’s view of mass psychology against Le Bon’s, siding with the former in his absence “of the traditional contempt for the masses” (*EFS* 121). Dealing with the masses, however, was not neglecting the individual. To Adorno, the masses consist of, at least, “*prima facie* individuals” (*EFS* 121). In this sense, Adorno’s analysis of the education of the masses under the fascist regime reaches to the heart of the matter, namely individual education. Changing the individual thus has the consequence of changing the masses. Adorno uses psychology as education. In essence, psychology is the knowledge of one’s self. It “presupposes,” as Adorno states, “freedom in the sense of a certain self-sufficiency and autonomy of the individual” (*EFS* 136). Wresting the individual unconscious from the grip of fascism is thus crucial in altering societal conditions, be they fascist or monopoly

capitalism. Through “making the subjects conscious of their unconscious,” asserts Adorno, psychological education contains the possibility of “awaken[ing] those who keep their eyes shut thought they are no longer asleep” (*EFS* 137).

Adorno and Horkheimer’s vehement critique of Marcuse’s essay did not stem from his methodological maneuvering, which was, for the most part, dialectic. Further, to assert that they had misunderstood or misread Marcuse’s ideas would grossly diminish the intellectual capabilities of these two men. Quite simply, Marcuse’s ideas were too radical for them. His promulgation of intolerance and violent revolution, no longer couched in the Aesopian language Marcuse previously used, were ideas that they could not support. In the hands of the student movement, with which Marcuse to some extent identified and supported, such ideas could, and ultimately would, prove dangerous.

In a letter to Marcuse from May 1967, Horkheimer expressed his concerns about the radical content and the political nature of his former colleague’s work. Foremost was his aversion to Marcuse’s call for violence. “Im übrigen weißt Du sehr wohl,” Horkheimer writes Marcuse, “dass mir der Terror zuwider ist” (*FSS* 2: 232). It was not a question of which side uses violent means to achieve its goals, but that the use of “Terror” is justifiable by neither the Left nor the Right. Further, Horkheimer criticized the radicality of Marcuse’s position itself:

H[erbert] M[arcuse] ist der Prototyp der radikalen Intellektuellen, die nicht etwa nur die Mißstände im eigenen Land angreifen, sondern gleichzeitig mit dem Osten sympathisieren. Damit propagieren sie aber die schlimmste Art der Barbarei....Radikal sein heißt heute konservativ sein (*FSS* 2: 237).

Horkheimer chided Marcuse’s criticism of the West, the USA as well as Germany, as conservative radicalism verging on a “Trend...zur totalen Bürokratie” (*FSS* 2: 237). The danger, according to Horkheimer, was not just that Marcuse espoused a theory of violence,



but that his violent radicalism bordered on bureaucratic barbarism (*Barbarei*). Marcuse's radicalism, conservative as it was in Horkheimer's eyes, was, nevertheless, cause for alarm concerning Marcuse's audience, the students. As Horkheimer writes in "Das Ziel des SDS:"

Die Aufforderung zum Guerilla-Krieg gegen die bestehende Ordnung, der 'Übergang vom bloßen Protest zur Aktion' bedeutet die Rückkehr zu einem Anarchismus, der nur aus einer winzigen 'Vorhut' besteht und sich nicht auf eine Massenbewegung stützen kann....Das Ergebnis der SDS-Bewegung in ihrer heutigen Phase führt notwendig zu einer Beschleunigung des Anwachsens des Neonazismus (*FSS* 2: 339).

Not only did the students' turn to violence regress to a form of anarchy, it created a situation where the necessary (*notwendig*) response came from the extreme Right. In short, student violence was a double regression into both anarchy and Nazism. To Horkheimer, Marcuse's support of the students on the Left shattered the critical distance between theory and those wishing to translate it into praxis, between the philosopher and the public, providing the possibility for anarchy and a return to fascism.

Adorno was similarly concerned with the combination of Marcuse's solidarity with the students and his radical philosophy. More than Horkheimer, Adorno disapproved of Marcuse's radical turn. Adorno viewed his colleague's disavowal of political distance from his philosophy as a betrayal not only of their philosophical canon but of their friendship as well. Marcuse's new position as "guru" of the student movement brought the two former colleagues into outright dispute. Writing to Horkheimer, Adorno conveyed his disappointment, "[Marcuse] müsste doch zu uns mehr Vertrauen haben als zu diesen Menschen, die eine bestimmte Konzeption so verstehen, dass sie die Einheit der Praxis mit einer nicht vorhandenen Theorie, kurz den puren begriffslosen Praktizismus betreiben" (*FSS* 2: 233). Moreover, Adorno feared that he and Horkheimer would become associated with Marcuse on the basis that all three were members of the Frankfurt School. To avoid such an

association, he recommended to Horkheimer that they speak with Marcuse to clarify that they did not agree with his ideas and that, in fact, such ideas “für uns das Grauen sind” (*FSS* 2: 219).

To the extent that Marcuse advocated violence in “Repressive Tolerance,” Horkheimer and Adorno were certainly alarmed. The fact that he was openly discussing these ideas with the student movement, which both Horkheimer and Adorno feared would prematurely and inadequately adopt these ideas, they thought was outright dangerous. The extent to which Marcuse was advocating student violence, however, is problematic. As previously established, the students were not, for Marcuse, the revolutionary subject. If Marcuse describes revolutionary violence in “Repressive Tolerance,” then it stands to argue that his espousal of violent revolution is not aimed at the students but at the revolutionary subject. The difference lies between revolutionary and reactionary violence. Revolutionary violence is ascribed to the revolutionary subject, while reactionary violence perpetuates current forms of domination.

### The Students’ Call for Violence

Violence and the student movement are inextricably linked. Not only violence enacted by certain groups and members of the student movement but the police violence and assassination attempts directed against the students. For the students during the 1960s the question of violence was of the utmost importance. Marcuse’s discussion of revolution and violence in “Repressive Tolerance” and the subsequent lecture on his essay to the students in Berlin occurred in close proximity to two violent events that rocked the foundation of the

student movement; the burning of the department store in Brussels and the death of student protestor Benne Ohnesorg, both in 1967. As the student movement reached a violent peak in the late 1960s, Marcuse's "Repressive Tolerance" seemed to speak to the students' violent quandary. As with Marcuse's concepts of utopia and the revolutionary subject, however, his notion of revolutionary violence was not easy to swallow. At a time when the student movement seemed destined to turn violent, Marcuse denied them this strategy as a possible recourse to the violence aimed against them.

On May 22, 1967, a department store in Brussels caught fire killing over 300 people. The cause of the fire was attributed to antiwar protestors and exaggerated by Axel Springer's sensationalist tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* as the violent alternative to previously ineffective peaceful protests (Briegleb 67-8). The department store burning became the subject of an infamously controversial flyer printed by Kommune I, a sub-group of the student movement. The flyer, as Richard Langston states, was "coiled like a snake...a mishmash of advertising copy dishwashing liquid, newspaper propaganda, pro-American boosterism, and the Marxist rhetoric prevalent within much of the student movement" (155). The flyer presents the sarcastic suggestion of a Vietnam being created on German soil. To be sure, not an act of violence itself, the Kommune I flyer represented the desire of the movement to "expand the boundaries of their own revolutionary praxis...by provoking outsiders...trigger[ing] visions of violence" (Langston 156-7). In this sense, the Kommune I flyer fulfills Marcuse's notion of "awakening political consciousness." It does not go beyond the boundary of the opposition that Marcuse prescribed, namely violent upheaval, but falls under the category of civil disobedience. The latter is crucial to Marcuse in preventing the opposition from becoming merely a "ritual event" with no substantive element (*FL* 89). Further, the flyer

does not remain within, what he calls, “the framework of legality” which only subjects the opposition to “institutionalized violence...restrict[ing] it to a suffocating minimum” (*FL* 89).

With the death of Benne Ohnesorg in June 1967, however, violence quickly turned from fantasy into reality. The student movement, which until this point was largely pacifist, engaging violence in rhetoric alone, was at a loss with the violent death of one of their own (Langston 154). Oskar Negt states the problem facing the student movement as such:

Aber darin liegt ja gerade das Problem, dass ursprünglich weitgehend gewaltlose Aktionsformen das staatliche Gewaltmonopol in einer Weise herausgefordert haben, dass übermäßige Gewaltreaktionen aus der Mitte des Rechtssystems heraus stattfinden (79).

Paradoxically, while the government challenged the nonviolent student protests they responded not with like, but with excessive violence. In an interview with Marcuse nearly a month after Ohnesorg’s death, Hans-Jürgen Krahle, a leader of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS), addressed the issue of non-violent opposition in the aftermath of this brutal act:

Wie ist es möglich, eine waffenlose Opposition zu organisieren, wie ist es möglich, eine materiell-manifeste Gewaltlosigkeit darzustellen, die den Anspruch auf eine revolutionäre Gegengewalt vertritt (*FSS* 2: 275)?

Krahle’s question illuminates the precarious position of the student movement after June 2, 1967, namely how to organize non-violent opposition that, at the same time, represents some form of revolutionary counter-violence. In this sense, Krahle is certainly indebted to Marcuse’s work. Like Marcuse, he recognizes a need for violence that responds to the institutionalized violence of the government. Nevertheless, Krahle’s question also reflects his misreading and misunderstanding of Marcuse. As Marcuse replied to Krahle:

Ich habe nicht behauptet, dass Gewaltlosigkeit als Prinzip der Strategie angewendet oder gepredigt werden muss. Ich habe keineswegs Humanität und Gewaltlosigkeit gleichgesetzt. Im Gegenteil, ich habe von Situationen

gesprochen, in denen es genau im Interesse der Humanität liegt, zur Gewalt überzugehen (*FSS* 2: 277).

The revolutionary counter-violence that Krahle is searching for is not in the hands of the student movement. To be sure, Marcuse speaks of situations where it is necessary to resort to violence. But necessary for whom and when? Having misunderstood their place as opposition, not as revolutionary subject, the students were thus unable to comprehend Marcuse's message of violence. As the opposition, the students' visions of violence served to fulfill the students' function, as Marcuse states in "Repressive Tolerance," of recreating "the mental space for denial and reflection" ("RT" 112). Any other form of violence would be premature and thus ineffective. Rudi Dutschke realized this fact stating in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1967:

Eine systematische Provokation mit Steinen ist absurd. Steine als Mittel der Auseinandersetzung unterscheiden sich prinzipiell nicht von Tomaten. Tomaten sind ohnmächtig, Steine sind ohnmächtig. Sie können nur begriffen werden als Vorformen wirklicher Auseinandersetzung (*MLM* 79).

The futility of premature student violence would, however, be proven one month later after the attempted assassination of Dutschke.

In May 1968, shortly after the failed assassination attempt that left Dutschke seriously wounded, student emotions exploded in a violent outburst against the *Bild-Zeitung*. The tabloid, which from the beginning portrayed the students as a threat, became the outlet against which the students directed their frustrations. The students attacked Springer's tabloid headquarters, overturning and burning delivery vans. Peter Schneider, who in his essay "Die *Bild-Zeitung*, ein Kampfblatt gegen die Massen" calls for the expropriation of Springer, did too little in his discourse on violence. He challenges the tabloid as not "enlightening" (*aufklären*) their readers, but rather "making them ignorant" (*dumm machen*) (16). "Accounts like Schneider's," Richard Langston suggests, "invoked the idea of violence

in order to underscore the severity of the press's intrusions in the mental life of its readers; according to this approach, manipulation was not especially violent" (172). Against this inadequate treatment of manipulatory violence, Knut Nevermann states: "We had to make it clear to the rest of the world that the existing means of manipulation had to be destroyed for the organized use of violence to come to an end. For this reason we had to resort to counter-violence" (Langston 173). This form of counter-violence, however, was ineffective. The *Bild-Zeitung* continued printing its defamatory reports about the students; the premature violence had changed nothing.

Marcuse's assessment of violence does not call for student revolution, much less violent rebellion. As far as violence is concerned, its function in the student movement is to serve as a critical reflection on the current reactionary violence enacted by the government. To quote Richard Langston, "the students' belief in their ability to differentiate their progressive brand of violence from the reactionary violence of media monopolies and the state" proved to be the exact opposite (173). Their rushed, spontaneous attack on the *Bild-Zeitung* equates more to reactionary violence than revolutionary. The ill-fated attack on the Springer headquarters is testament to Marcuse's theory. In the end, their "progressive violence" was nothing more than a failed attempt that made the situation, if not worse, none the better. Marcuse's words foreshadow this failure:

To seek confrontations only for their own sake is not only unnecessary, it is irresponsible. Confrontations are there....Going out of the way to find them would falsify the opposition, for today it is in a defensive, not offensive, position (*FL* 88).

## Conclusion

During the tumultuous 1960s Marcuse became the spokesperson for the student movement. Works such as *The One-Dimensional Man* and “Repressive Tolerance” elevated him to the status of guru for a generation trying to find its place in society and at the same time trying to change its existing structure. This was a role Marcuse was not willing to play:

Ich habe mich nie als den “ideologischen Führer der Neuen Linken” bezeichnet, und ich glaube auch nicht, dass die Linke einen ideologischen Führer braucht. Eines braucht sie bestimmt nicht, nämlich eine neue Vaterfigur, einen neuen Daddy. Und ich will ganz bestimmt keiner sein (NS 4: 105).

Marcuse’s complicated position, supporting the students but simultaneously distancing himself and his philosophy from them, created an atmosphere of betrayal and confusion amongst his former colleagues and the students themselves. To the former, Marcuse had abandoned the critical distance between philosopher and public. Marcuse’s radical ideas of intolerance and revolutionary violence in “Repressive Tolerance” distanced him from Horkheimer and Adorno more than ever before. Although he did not encourage violent action on the part of the students, offering instead, like his colleagues, a pedagogical role for the students, his public role with the student movement nonetheless brought his theory even closer to those hoping to turn it into practice. Perhaps Horkheimer and Adorno foresaw the terrifying consequences of philosophy in the hands of a young generation unable to comprehend its negativity, culminating in the surge of violence after 1968 and ultimately in the Baader-Meinhof Gruppe. Marcuse himself was coming to realize this fact: “Es scheint,” Marcuse stated in a letter to Dutschke in 1968, “dass die Studentenopposition in zunehmendem Maße von falschradiakalen Gruppen übernommen wird und sich in sinnlosen Aktionen an falsher Stelle verspielt” (FSS 2: 336). To the students, Marcuse was an enigma.

Though he advocated slanted tolerance in the direction of their movement and ideas, Marcuse did not see the students as the lost revolutionary subject. They were certainly an integral part of the opposition that could produce the revolutionary subject, but were not the revolution as such, and Marcuse was not their leader. He refused to prescribe the “positive” utopia that they longed for. Moreover, Marcuse preached violent revolutionary action at a time when the student movement was trying to come to grips with the increased violence surrounding the movement, while at the same time denying them the ability to produce a successful violent revolution. Marcuse’s “Repressive Tolerance” was the betrayal of two generations, that of his colleagues in the Frankfurt School and the students. He truly found himself between a rock and a hard place.



## The Return to Heidegger or Marcuse: Left Heideggarian?

### Introduction: Marcuse, Heidegger and the Frankfurt School

The previous chapter dealt with the political and revolutionary ramifications of Marcuse's tolerance essay, focusing on the controversial topics of utopia, the revolutionary subject and violence. As I demonstrated, the combination of these three key concepts in Marcuse's work made him the target of not only Horkheimer and Adorno, but the students as well. His political activism, engaging the students on their own turf and not shying away from such heated topics, was a betrayal of the critical distance fostered by his colleagues. They feared the students would adopt Marcuse's radical ideas, carrying them out to their fullest and most devastating consequences. To some extent, they were right. The students, on the other hand, simply did not receive the answers they wanted from their "mentor." Marcuse denied them talk of a positive utopia as well as the revolutionary torch of the proletariat. At a time when the students wanted to turn to violence in response to police brutality, Marcuse deprived them as well of the agency to do so. Is this, however, all there is to the story? Can Marcuse's quarrel with the students and his colleagues be summed up in his radical political espousals, or is there more to "Repressive Tolerance?"

It is, of course, no secret that Marcuse was a student of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, published in 1927, so impressed the young Marcuse that he went to Freiburg to study under the philosopher. For Marcuse, Heidegger's brand of

phenomenological existentialism offered the one thing that other existentialist philosophers could not, a theory of man's being-in-the-world. This provided a much-needed foundation for Marcuse's Marxist roots, which he attempted to synthesize with Heidegger's philosophy. For one, Marcuse believed Heidegger's being-in-the-world overcame the subject-object dualism, a problem that plagued philosophy from its outset (*CM* 44).<sup>3</sup> Marcuse saw this as a new start in philosophy, one that concretized philosophical endeavors and made them relevant to the world in which one lives:

[...] and then suddenly *Being and Time* appeared as a really concrete philosophy. One spoke of "life" (*Dasein*), "existence" (*Existenz*), the "they" (*das Man*), "death" (*Tod*), "care" (*Sorge*). That seemed to speak to us (*HC* 136).

Second, Heidegger's emphasis on the individual corrected what Marcuse viewed as a defect in Marxist theory, namely that the individual was viewed simply as a "function[] of a class or group with no special interest or importance" himself (*CM* 63). Though Marcuse believed to have found the missing piece to his understanding of Marx in Heidegger's existential ontology, the relationship between mentor and pupil was not without strain. Marcuse, after all, was heavily influenced by Marx. Heidegger, on the other hand, was rabidly anticommunist - so much so, in fact, that this would lead him to support the Nazi regime beginning in 1933 (*Ott* 321). With Heidegger's acceptance of the Third Reich, student and mentor inevitably parted ways.

The year of Heidegger's betrayal marks a turning point for Marcuse. In 1933, Adorno recommended Marcuse to become a new member of the Frankfurt School and, with Horkheimer's approval, Marcuse was accepted into the fold. Adorno, in fact, rolled the dice

---

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* was the supposed solution to the subject/object dichotomy. Through existential ontology, Heidegger believed to have resolved the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, collapsing the two in his notion of *Dasein*.

with Marcuse. “Although Adorno felt there was some ground still to be covered before Marcuse cast off Heidegger’s thrall entirely,” Martin Jay asserts, “the chance for a successful integration of his approach to philosophy with that of the [Frankfurt School] seemed favorable” (29). The fact that Marcuse worked with Heidegger was alone enough to provoke caution from the Frankfurt School. It was testament as well to their extreme aversion to Heidegger’s existential ontology.

Chief among the Frankfurt School’s criticism was Heidegger’s espousal of an identity theory. The subject/object distinction, following the Cartesian tradition that man is both a subject and an object, was one that Heidegger believed to have overcome. In short, Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* collapsed the subject/object distinction. Man’s existence was not a twofold category subsisting of man as a subject, mind, and as object, thing, but the totality of these two. As Heidegger states at the beginning of the first chapter of *Sein und Zeit*, “*Das ‘Wesen’ des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz*” (42, author’s italics). Thus from the outset, Heidegger tautologically claims that what it is to be a being is simply to exist and, moreover, this existence is being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*). To be sure, Heidegger does not claim that man’s being, *Dasein*, is the same as a tree’s, table’s, or house’s, to use Heidegger’s examples. The being of these objects, present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) for trees and stones and ready-at-hand (*Zuhandenheit*) for tools, is different in that these objects do not make an “*issue*” (*darum geht*) (42, author’s italics) of their being, or as Hubert Dreyfus states, take a “stand on their being” (15). Man, in contrast, uses these other objects in order to make his world intelligible, thereby taking a stand on his being. This most fundamental way of being does not require the conscious subject for, as Dreyfus quotes, “‘All consciousness presupposes...existence as the *essentia* of man’” (15). Thus, for Heidegger,

man's being is just that, being an object amidst a world of interrelated though existentially different objects.

To the members of the Frankfurt School, Heidegger's identity theory entirely collapses the dialectic. For them, nonidentity is the key to critical thought. If the individual is to think, or reflect, on his existence then nonidentity is the prerequisite to such critical thought (Buck-Morss 84). The key to the Frankfurt School's nonidentity theory is the dialectical relationship between subject and object. They are neither idealists nor pure materialists, the former emphasizing the subject, the latter the object. Rather, they stress the interaction between the two in a constellate fashion, where any alteration to the subject affects the object and vice versa. Thus, the Frankfurt School proposes neither a collapse of the subject/object dialect nor the hypostatization in the separation. As Adorno states in his essay "Zu Subjekt und Objekt:"

Zwar können sie als getrennte nicht weggedacht werden; das  $\psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma$  (*pseudos*) der Trennung jedoch äußert sich darin, dass sie wechselseitig durcheinander vermittelt sind, Objekt durch Subjekt, mehr noch und anders Subjekt durch Objekt. Zur Ideologie, geradezu ihrer Normalform, wird die Trennung, sobald sie ohne Vermittlung fixiert ist (KG Bd. 2 742).

The mediation (*Vermittlung*) between the two, necessary to prevent the fall into ideology, is the place of philosophy, or better yet critical theory. Identity theory, emphasizing either the subject or the object, as well as the collapse or the separation is the end of mediation, the end of critical reflection. Heidegger's identity theory leaves no room for such reflection. Man as an object need only deal with other objects, look at a tree or bang a hammer, to exist. To the members of the Frankfurt School, this lack of mediation between subject and object destroys thought. As Susan Buck-Morss states in *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, "The object [is] thus more than itself, and knowledge of it [is] more than a tautological  $A=A$ . But only by the mediation of conceptual reflection [can] this relationship be understood, precisely because it

[is] not immediately ‘given’ in experience” (73). Methodologically, an identity theory erases the dialectic, the philosophical crux of the Frankfurt School. As Heidegger himself states, “Die ‘Dialektik,’ die eine echte philosophische Verlegenheit war, wird überflüssig” (25). Thus, to the Frankfurt School, Heidegger is a philosophical nemesis.

There is, however, more at stake to the Frankfurt School than just the attack of their philosophical principles. Heidegger’s identity theory, which reifies the human subject, has drastic societal implications. “Positive and negative,” Adorno states in *Jargon of Authenticity*, “are reified prior to all living experience, as though they were valid prior to all living experience of them” (21). The collapse of the positive and negative is the ossification of alternatives. When the world is seen as predetermined, a place where man must merely cope, the chance of changing the world is non-existent. The reification of the human subject removes agency in the world. If the world is as it is “prior” to any human intervention, man’s ability to change societal conditions, poverty, war and oppression, disappear. According to Adorno, such conditions become “eternally instituted at just that moment when, thanks to the state of human achievements, such a limitation no longer needs in reality to exist” (JA 27). Whereas a nonidentity theory allows for alternatives in the transitory nature of the world, identity destroys the possibility for change (Buck-Morss 76). Moreover, the reified subject, who is not able to change the state of what is, is not responsible for his actions; he can do nothing, his guiding light is selfishness. Adorno locates this fact in Heidegger’s discussion of the “mineness” of being. Heidegger writes, “Das Ansprechen von Dasein muss gemäß dem Charakter der *Jemeinigkeit* dieses Seienden stets das *Personalpronomen* mitsagen: ‘ich bin,’ ‘du bist’” (42, author’s italics). Ultimately, “the individual subject,” asserts Adorno, “chooses itself as its own possession” (JA 115). One

need only look to the Holocaust to see the terrible ramification of such an objectification of man. The individual is no longer regarded as a thinking, feeling subject, but as an expendable item. The full horror of this outcome is exemplified by Heidegger's statement about the Holocaust. "Agriculture is today," he states, "a motorized food industry, in essence the same as the manufacture of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps" (*PB* 168). The relation of the victims of Hitler's extermination policy to the production of assembly line food is the ultimate terrifying consequence of Heidegger's reification of the subject (*PB* 168). It was, therefore, not only against Heidegger's philosophy but also against the realization of it that the Frankfurt School waged their dialectical war.

It is against this backdrop of philosophical dispute, verging closely on hatred, that the former student of Heidegger entered the Frankfurt School. The question remains to what extent Adorno lost his gamble on Marcuse, to bring him to the side of the Frankfurt School and away from his Heideggarian past. Did Marcuse return to the ideas he fostered under the tutelage of his Freiburg mentor? Can Marcuse's Heideggarian heritage open a philosophical door for understanding his break with the Frankfurt School in the 1960s and the students' frustration and misunderstanding? The following chapter will take up where Richard Wolin's introduction to his collection of Marcuse's early essays left off. There Wolin asks: "Did the later Marcuse then attempt to refit the withering critique of mass society contained in Heidegger's treatment of 'everydayness' for the ends of the political left?" (*HM* xxvii). I will demonstrate that the Marcuse of the 1960s returns to his earlier Heideggarian roots and that his radical political ideas are, in fact, in part the result of his radical philosophical roots. The first section will put Marcuse's early work, primarily his 1929 essay "Über konkrete Philosophie," in dialog with "Repressive Tolerance" to show that not only did the ideas

reappear in his work, but also to the same end he prescribed some thirty years before. The conclusion to this chapter will revisit the Frankfurt School and the student movement and assess how his Heideggarian influence can further explain his tension with these two groups. Marcuse's theory is a modification of both Marx and Heidegger. Though many refer to this as an attempt that did not succeed, Marcuse's synthesis of these two philosophers not only sets him apart from his Frankfurt School counterparts, but is also a strength in his thought. His dialectical modification of Heidegger, re-inflating the dialectic that Heidegger collapses, and the insertion of *existentiell* characteristics into his understanding of Marx, enables Marcuse to traverse philosophical territory unlike that of his contemporaries. Through the dialectical interplay of Marx and Heidegger, Marcuse is able to establish a concrete, *existentiell* notion of revolution that places him between two competing forces, the Frankfurt School and the student movement.

#### “Über konkrete Philosophie” and “Repressive Tolerance”

In order to begin talking about the possibility of Heideggarian thought coming again to the fore of Marcuse's writing in the mid to late 1960s, it is first necessary to establish two qualifiers. One, against which other work can we see the reappearance of these Heideggarian ideas? To look at “Repressive Tolerance” in isolation and apply Heideggarian terminology *ex post facto* would indeed be a dubious line of argumentation. For this reason, we must return to Marcuse's earlier work that he wrote while still working with Heidegger in order to assess the extent to which certain existential ideas do in fact show themselves. Reading “Repressive Tolerance” through the lens of Marcuse's 1929 essay “Über konkrete

Philosophie” provides just such a bridge between early and late Marcuse. Second, we need to establish which terms Marcuse appropriates from Heidegger and in what sense Marcuse uses them toward his own ends. Marcuse, to be sure, does not employ the same Heideggarian jargon that he was able to in 1929 in “Repressive Tolerance.” Nevertheless, upon closer inspection of these terms, their latent ideas are brought to light in a way that allows them to resurface thirty-seven years later.

Foremost among the Heideggarian terms that influenced Marcuse is that of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). Heidegger argues that Dasein can consist of “je in einem dieser Modi,” authenticity and “inauthenticity” (*Uneigentlichkeit*) (53). Each person therefore has the potential for being one or the other. Those to whom Heidegger attributes the latter of the two he terms “the They” (*das Man*), and it is “the They” that constitute everyday Dasein and against whom one must struggle to gain authenticity.<sup>4</sup> The primary characteristic of the inauthentic “the They” is “averageness” (*Durchschnittlichkeit*) (127). These individuals are the bearers of “publicness” (*Öffentlichkeit*) and idle talk (*Gerede*) which serve to perpetuate “averageness” and in this way, Heidegger claims, “wacht über jede sich vordrängende Ausnahme” (127). Therefore, the “inauthenticity” of “the They” impedes one from achieving authenticity. According to Douglas Kellner, the individual in Heidegger “is dominated by powerful social forces, conforms to standard modes of behaviour and ...loses [] individuality and autonomy failing to develop one’s powers of creativity, will, responsibility, etc.” (CM 44). This concept spoke to Marcuse’s Marxist side in using the idea of (in)authenticity to bolster his notion of a socially corrupt society (CM 44).

---

<sup>4</sup> The translation of this term is notoriously tricky. Though in most translations of *Sein und Zeit*, “das Man” is translated as “the They,” scholars such as Hubert Dreyfus have argued for the more German translation ‘the one’ in the sense of “one pays one’s taxes.” For our purposes, however, the traditional “the They” will be kept. See Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 152.



To regain one's authenticity requires, for Heidegger a self-transformation of the individual, a radical act. Though not a Heideggarian term, Marcuse, whose philosophy largely centers on the radical act, derives the idea of what constitutes a radical act by way of Heidegger (*CM* 41). The concreteness of Heideggarian existentialism offered Marcuse a new theory for man's possibilities of changing society. Contrary to Adorno's analysis, Marcuse saw in Heidegger the return of man's place in the world. Heideggarian being-in-the-world wrested man from pure existentialism and transcendental thought and returned to him a concrete role in his world. Endowed with this new task, man becomes the bearer of action, or more precisely radical action (*HC* 146). As stated in the introduction, man differs from the objects that surround him based on his "taking a stand on his being." Accordingly, man must take a stand on his authenticity, or lack thereof, as well. "Das *eigentlich Selbstsein* beruht nicht auf einem vom Man abgelösten Ausnahmezustand des Subjekts," Heidegger claims, "sondern ist eine existentielle Modifikation 'des Man' als eines wesenhaften Existenzials" (130, author's italics). Thus, what is required for the transformation from "inauthenticity" to authenticity is not an inner characteristic, condition, or knowledge of the individual, that is to say a mental change, but rather a transformation of his concrete existence, action (*HC* 144). To be sure, Heidegger does not offer the possibility of man altering existence. The structure of existence, the "existential," cannot be changed. Here Adorno is completely correct. The radical act, however, is "existentiell."<sup>5</sup> It aims to transform the existence of the individual (*HC* 146).

---

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger's project aims to disclose the structure of existence, not merely the different categories of being. The structure of being he calls the existential. The *existentiell*, on the other hand concerns an individual's own understanding of this being. This difference parallels the ontological/ontic distinction, the former pertaining to the structure of being, the latter to the properties of being. See Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 20.

For Marcuse this act has Marxist ramifications. If “inauthenticity” is the result of “powerful social forces,” or “the They,” then altering the existence of the inauthentic individual can potentially usher in a new society. As Marcuse states in “Beiträge zu einer Phänomenologie des Historischen Materialismus:”

Jede Tat ist eine menschliche “Veränderung der Umstände,” aber nicht jede Tat verändert auch die menschliche *Existenz*. Man kann die Umstände verändern, ohne das menschliche Dasein, das in und mit diesen Umständen lebt, in seiner Existenz zu verändern. Nur die *radikale Tat* verändert mit den Umständen auch die in ihnen tätige menschliche Existenz (351, author’s italics).

Thus, the radical act for Marcuse is a revolution in the existence of the individual and his society. The change in the individual, however, is the precondition for societal change; the act itself does nothing. Only the radical act contains the true possibilities for change. In this sense, Marcuse sought to link Marx and Heidegger dialectically. “A demand for ‘radical action’ was a position that Marx and Heidegger shared,” states Richard Wolin (*HC* 146). It is Marcuse, however, who fuses the radical *existentiell* act with the societal.

Heidegger’s existential ontological approach to philosophy negatively influenced Marcuse’s concept of the role of the philosopher in exacting the necessary changes in the individual and society. No longer was the philosopher to remain in his lofty tower, merely questioning and analyzing esoteric ideas from on high. The role of the philosopher was to become public, to enter the public sphere in order to alter it. Though arriving at this conclusion in part from Heidegger’s philosophy, Marcuse stressed the public role of the philosopher and philosophy while disregarding Heidegger’s notion of “publicness” as a characteristic of “inauthenticity” (*HC* 149). “Publicness” as characteristic of “the They,” Heidegger argues, “regelt zunächst alle Welt- und Daseinsauslegung und behält in allem Recht....Die Öffentlichkeit verdunkelt alles und gibt das so Verdeckte als das Bekannte und

jedem Zugängliche aus" (127). Through the "publicness" of "the They," the individual becomes accustomed to his "inauthenticity." Where "Das Man ist überall dabei," states Heidegger, the individual becomes "accommodated" (*kommt...dem Dasein entgegen*) and "disburdened" (*entlastet*) of its being (127). One merely conforms to the pre-established norms of the dominant "the They." The weapon of "the They's" publicness is idle talk. What gets obscured (*verdunkelt*), and passed off as something familiar (*gibt...als...Bekannte...aus*) is rooted in the "Weiter- und Nachredens" of idle talk (168). Thus, Heidegger posits, "Das Gerede, das jeder aufraffen kann, entbindet nicht nur von der Aufgabe echten Verstehens, sondern bildet eine indifferente Verständlichkeit aus...." (169). Conversely, for Marcuse, the public role of the philosopher can break the stranglehold of idle talk. Armchair philosophy, which does not interest itself in action, "publicness," or practical application, is doomed to remain merely idle talk (*HC* 149).

In his essay "Über konkrete Philosophie," Marcuse puts Marx and Heidegger into dialectical conversation linking, as Douglas Kellner states, "the material conditions of existence, with the production and reproduction of everyday life" (*CM* 63-4). Marcuse's negative dialectic, however, provides for a curious mixture. To be sure, Marcuse is neither a vulgar Marxist nor an existentialist. Rather, he pits both philosophers against one another, illuminating their weaknesses. From the debris of this dialectical method, Marcuse is able to resurrect those ideas in Marx, historical materialism, and in Heidegger, the individual, to correct the shortcomings of both philosophies. Ultimately, Marcuse uses Marx to flip Heidegger on his head and vice versa. For Marcuse, this dialectical relationship, and the dialectical method overall, as a guide to revolutionary praxis, preserves the unity of theory and praxis "for it shows," according to Kellner, "what features of a given social-economic-

historical situation should be negated in order to liberate more progressive tendencies” (CM 53). The philosopher then, in preserving this unity, has the responsibility of bringing it into the public sphere. As Marcuse states:

Wenn wirklich es der Philosophie um die Existenz geht, dann muss sie diese Existenz auf sich nehmen und ... um die Wahrheit kämpfen. Der Philosoph muss wissen, dass er nicht nur das Recht, sondern die Pflicht hat, in die ganz konkreten Nöte der Existenz einzugreifen, weil der existenzielle Sinn der Wahrheit nur so erfüllt werden kann. So steht am Ende jeder echten konkreten Philosophie die *öffentliche Tat* (“ÜkP” 405, my italics)

There exists not only a certain urgency in Marcuse’s language, but a battle cry; the philosopher must be ready to fight (*kämpfen*) for existence and the truth and has the duty (*Pflicht*) to do so. Marcuse’s concrete philosophy is thus not rooted in the sphere of pure theory, reflection and criticism, but rather action. “Wenn die konkrete Philosophie wirklich ein Dasein in die Wahrheit bringen will,” Marcuse stresses, “so muss sie es in der Sphäre angreifen, in der allein existentielle Entscheidungen fallen können: in der Sphäre des Handelns” (“ÜkP” 399). Marcuse’s brand of philosophy calls not only for an *existentiell* uprooting of man’s being but also demands this in his sphere action, where man is “als ‘Geschehen’ stets ein Ändern, Verändern von Gegebenheiten, ein Wirken” (“ÜkP” 399).

Marcuse realizes man’s world not as a Heideggarian imperative, but rather a place where not only human change is possible but where man can change society. “[Das Dasein] lebt nicht in der Geschichte als seinem mehr oder weniger zufälligen Raum oder Element,” he claims, “sondern das konkrete Existieren des Daseins *ist* Geschehen....” (“ÜkP” 389). Human existence is not merely a product of history, it is history itself; that is, it happens along with history, which shape each other. This synthesis of Marx and Heidegger, the being of man both in history and an active part in it, allows Marcuse to insert the individual into Marx’s revolutionary equation as well as to give man a role in changing the course of history.

Marcuse returns agency to human existence. As with Heidegger, however, Marcuse notes that the individual is not always capable of taking advantage of his agency. The revolutionary agency of the individual is always there, though at times it becomes the goal of philosophy rather than the point of departure. Marcuse contends:

Es gibt geschichtliche Situationen, in denen ein Aufbau der Existenz vom einzelnen her möglich ist, in denen die Revolutionierung der einzelnen die Revolution der Gesellschaft bedeuten kann. Und es gibt geschichtliche Situationen, wo dies in keiner Weise mehr möglich ist, weil die gleichzeitige Weise des gesellschaftlichen Seins die eigentliche Existenz des einzelnen ausschließt....Dann ist der einzelne nicht mehr Ansatz, sondern Ziel der Philosophie, weil er überhaupt erst wieder möglich werden muss (ÜkP 405).<sup>6</sup>

Where the revolutionary subject is inauthentic, it becomes the duty of philosophy to guide the individual towards authenticity. Were one to substitute Heideggarian jargon at this point, philosophy must wrest Dasein away from “the They” in order for it to reach its authentic *existentiell* potentiality (*Seinkönnen*). For Marcuse and Heidegger alike, being is always action, though not always positively connoted. Heidegger’s “the They” is no less an active form of being than authentic Dasein. Whether in either mode of being, authentic or inauthentic, one cannot stop actively being. The difference for both Heidegger and Marcuse is the radical nature of the action. Radical action sets one apart from “the They” and, for Marcuse, distinguishes revolutionary action from everyday action. Contrary to Heidegger, however, for Marcuse not everyone is capable of radical action, action that is both *existentiell* and socially revolutionary. Here again the dialectical relationship between Marx and Heidegger comes into play. To return to Marcuse’s statement in “Beiträge zu einer Phänomenologie des Historischen Materialismus,” every act has the potential to alter society, but not every act alters human existence along with it. It is neither enough merely to change

---

<sup>6</sup> Where Heidegger creates his own term ‘(Un)Eigentlichkeit’ to combat the idea that there can be an real (eigentlich) or unreal (uneigentlich) existence, Marcuse just uses the term ‘eigentlich’ for authentic. See Michael Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, p. 22-23.

the structure of society nor to change human existence. For Marcuse, both society and existence are the goal of the radical act. Though the proletariat no longer carries this revolutionary torch, Marcuse does not relinquish it to everyone. The oppressed peoples of the third world, by virtue of their position outside advanced industrial society, are the revolutionaries. They are capable of the radical act, changing both society and human existence. Marcuse also admits that not every situation will lend itself to the intervention of concrete philosophy in this revolutionary struggle (“ÜkP” 406). But in those situations “wo die gleichzeitige Existenz wirklich in ihren Grundlagen erschüttert ist, d.h. wo wirklich um neue Möglichkeiten des Seins gekämpft wird” philosophy must act as a guide to authentic revolution, or risk becoming inauthentic idle talk (“ÜkP” 406).

Against such a foundation-shaking background, Marcuse’s “Repressive Tolerance” enters the scene as the concrete philosophy of which he spoke in the late 1920s. Movements in both Germany and America were attacking the core of their established societies from the civil rights movement, the protests against the Johnson administration and the Vietnam War, to the student movement. One need look no further than the opening paragraphs of “Repressive Tolerance” to see the public act of the philosopher Marcuse come again to the fore: “...[the author] believes that it is the *task* and *duty* of the intellectual to recall and preserve historical possibilities” (“RT” 81, my italics). This is not to say that Marcuse thinks the time is ripe for such a realization of “historical possibilities,” but that where the existing society is in such a state of upheaval the philosopher’s role is determined.<sup>7</sup> As in “Über

---

<sup>7</sup> See the section on Freedom, Utopia and the Revolutionary Subject in Chapter One.

konkrete Philosophie” it is the philosopher’s duty to enter the public stage. “Repressive Tolerance” as well as the lectures to the German students are Marcuse’s “öffentliche Tat.”<sup>8</sup>

The subject in “Repressive Tolerance” has likewise succumbed to “inauthenticity.” To be sure, Marcuse no longer uses this term. Instead, Marcuse substitutes it with “autonomy” and “false consciousness,” which, despite their departure from Heideggarian vocabulary, maintain “inauthenticity’s” original intent.<sup>9</sup> Marcuse’s analysis of tolerance in advanced industrial society echoes “Über konkrete Philosophie” in which he states: “Für jeden, der diesen Vorgang des ursprünglichen Entdeckens nicht mit seiner ganzen Person wiederholt, wird die Erkenntnis zum Kennen, die Wahrheit zum Für-wahr-Halten” (“ÜkP” 387). Heidegger’s idea of the “inauthenticity” of “the They” lies at the core of this statement. Recognition as familiarity (*Kennen*) and the obscuring of facts resulting in the acceptance of the status quo interpretation resound throughout Heidegger’s discussion of the inauthentic “the They.” In “Repressive Tolerance,” this mediation of facts in the guise of tolerance prevents the individual from becoming autonomous. Marcuse believes that “other words can be spoken and heard...but, at the massive scale of the conservative majority, they are immediately ‘evaluated’ in terms of the public language—a language which determines ‘a priori’ the direction in which the thought process moves” (“RT” 96). To the extent that, as Marcuse claims, “liberty is self-determination, autonomy,” pre-established thought and norms hinder the development of the autonomous, authentic individual (“RT” 86). In the same way Heidegger’s “the They” function as the bearers and perpetuators of knowledge, the

---

<sup>8</sup> The lecture series given after the German publication of “Repressive Tolerance” in 1967 was titled “Das Ende der Utopie” and consisted of three lectures. The earlier quoted “Das Problem der Gewalt in der Opposition” is one of these three lectures.

<sup>9</sup> The term “false consciousness” is certainly a Marxist term and one often used by Horkheimer and especially Adorno.

majority rules supreme for Marcuse. The majority not only immediately evaluates knowledge and information, but in doing so, Marcuse asserts, “militates against social change” (“RT” 94).

The danger for Marcuse lies not only in the dependent nature of the inauthentic individual, but his acceptance of his current state. The illusion of the freedom of thought presented by the idea of tolerance creates a “false consciousness” in which the individual accepts this illusion as reality. With this term, Marcuse injects the dialectic, the category of nonidentity, into Heidegger. Where “inauthenticity” and autonomy relate to the objective nature of man, the *existentiell*, false consciousness enters the subjective realm, which Heidegger cuts off. False consciousness, therefore, represents the subject/object dialectic in “Repressive Tolerance.” Although autonomy and authenticity affect the objective existence of the individual, false consciousness concerns the psyche and the disastrous effects to it wrought by repressive knowledge and “pure tolerance.” Where all ideas and opinions are treated equally, there is no need to transcend the current reality to a true state of autonomous, authentic existence. As Marcuse states, “the people exposed to this impartiality...are indoctrinated by the conditions under which they live and think and which they do not transcend” (“RT” 98). He is then able to claim that this false consciousness in turn becomes general consciousness (“RT” 110). The state of the individual thus translates into the state of society writ large. As Marcuse states in “Über konkrete Philosophie:”

Vielmehr ist der einzelne in der ‘Geworfenheit’ seines Daseins dieser Welt so überantwortet, dass seine Entscheidungen ihm durch sie vorgegeben sind (ohne dass dadurch der Ernst der Entscheidung dem einzelnen abgenommen und auf das ‘Schicksal’ oder die Gesellschaft geschoben wäre). Die Gesellschaft ist weder ein daseiendes Subjekt neben dem einzelnen noch die Summe der einzelnen, sondern in ganz konkretem Sinne ist die Gesellschaft jeder einzelne selbst...(404).



As the embodiment of society and subject of its pre-given decisions, societal norms dominate the individual to such an extent that the acceptance of its standards becomes an integral part of the individual himself. What remains, according to Marcuse, is a general state of the acceptance of norms.

The term Marcuse uses here, “Geworfenheit” (*thrownness*), carries a very specific Heideggerian meaning, which is key not only to the understanding of this statement in “Über konkrete Philosophie” but for Marcuse’s idea of “false consciousness” in “Repressive Tolerance.” Heidegger states in *Sein und Zeit* that, “Der Ausdruck Geworfenheit soll die *Faktizität der Überantwortung* andeuten,” it is the “Dass es ist und zu sein hat” of Dasein (135, author’s italics). The “thrownness” of Dasein relates to the individual’s lack of control (Inwood 219). This is tied up with its “facticity” (*Faktizität*) which is, according to Hubert Dreyfus, socially determined:

Thus, for example, it is a fact that like any other animal, *Homo sapiens* is either male or female. This fact, however, is transformed into a social interpretation of human beings as either *masculine* or *feminine*. In Heidegger’s terminology, we can say that *Homo sapiens* can be characterized by *factuality* (e.g., male or female), like any object, but that, because human beings “exist,” have Dasein in them, they must be understood in their *facticity* as a gendered way of being, e.g., as masculine or feminine (24, author’s italics).

The “thrownness” of being and the “inauthenticity” thereof, according to Heidegger, is a result of the socially constituted nature of the individual who is dominated by the pre-established thought of “the They.” “Zu dessen Faktizität gehört,” states Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, “dass das Dasein, *solange* es ist, was es ist, im Wurf bleibt und in die Uneigentlichkeit des Man hineingewirbelt wird.” (179, author’s italics). Thus the individual will remain subject to the pre-interpretedness of “the They” until it ceases to be merely “what it is” and realizes its potential for another way of being, being authentic. Viewed in this way

then, Marcuse's "false consciousness" closely parallels "thrownness" in both "Über konkrete Philosophie" and *Sein und Zeit*. The dependent individual of whom he speaks in "Repressive Tolerance" is likewise dominated by the socially predetermined ideas of the majority. Under the veil of tolerance, which is nothing more than the cover for the majority's mental dominance, the individual becomes "sucked into" (*hineingewirbelt*) a socially determined way of life, not only accepting it but becoming lost in it as well. Not realizing how he entered this realm, he has seemingly no way out. The individual's false consciousness assures him that there is nothing wrong; rebelling against the majority becomes a non-issue. Inextricably linked, dependence and false consciousness function to restrain the individual in the same manner as Heidegger's "inauthenticity" and "thrownness." Unable to think for itself, Dasein in Heidegger and the individual in Marcuse are constantly in the grip of pre-established thought from which, it would seem, there is no escape.

In the society of total administration and domination, Marcuse admits that "the effort of emancipation becomes 'abstract'" ("RT" 112). "More than ever," he states, "the proposition holds true that progress in freedom demands progress in the *consciousness* of freedom" ("RT" 112, author's italics). This "abstract" emancipation, however, does not mean that Marcuse abandons his idea of a concrete change, quite to the contrary. Marcuse's freeing of the consciousness has a concrete impact on the individual, opening the realm of thought from which he can make the transition from inauthentic to authentic, dependent to autonomous. To be sure, it is abstract in the sense that it is indeed a mental change, a turn away from the pre-interpreted thought of the inauthentic majority. Nevertheless, Marcuse's quotation around the word demonstrates that this term is not to be taken *prima facie*. "[Philosophie]," Marcuse writes "hat jede Bewegung der Existenz genau zu beobachten: die

vorzutreiben, die eine Bewegung zur Wahrheit hin darstellt, die zu hindern, die in verfallende Existenzweisen führt” (“ÜkP” 397). The idea of slanted tolerance towards those ideas and movements that challenge the existing society was already established in Marcuse’s 1929 essay. In as much as his concern at that time was the concrete change of existence, “abstract” emancipation in the sense of altering the consciousness of the individual carries with it quite concrete consequences.<sup>10</sup> In advocating and promulgating those ideas that challenge the status quo, philosophy takes part in the realm of concrete existence; for existence is never something abstract. As in “Über konkrete Philosophie,” “Repressive Tolerance” recognizes the absence of an authentic, autonomous individual, and likewise requires the return thereof for any possibility of societal change. The prediction Marcuse made thirty years before has come true, the individual has become the goal of philosophy, not its point of departure.

Up to now, the discussion has primarily centered on the individual and knowledge in accordance with the ideas of autonomy and false consciousness, authenticity and “thrownness” respectively. In both “Über konkrete Philosophie” and “Repressive Tolerance,” the obstacle to any kind of societal change is the inauthentic individual. Therefore it becomes the philosopher’s duty to reawaken the individual to his “inauthenticity” to break the chain of the status quo. “To enable [the individual] to become autonomous,” affirms Marcuse, “...they would have to be freed from the prevailing indoctrination” (“RT” 99). In both essays, this requires slanted tolerance towards ideas and

---

<sup>10</sup> We can see perhaps a connection between Marcuse’s idea of altering consciousness and Walter Benjamin’s concept of consciousness raising which comes to the fore in such works as *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* and “The Author as Producer.” Adorno attacked Benjamin’s concept as reifying consciousness. This could well prove to be another of Adorno’s problems with Marcuse, especially with Marcuse’s work in the late 1960s and early 1970s such as *An Essay on Liberation* where Marcuse invests more time in the area of consciousness raising. For more on Adorno and Benjamin’s arguments see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, pp. 146-50.

movements that counteract the prevailing norms of society established by the dominant majority. In this sense then, Marcuse claimed that emancipation was “abstract,” though, as mentioned, this “abstract” liberation was indeed concrete in view of its affect on individual existence. What then is the *existentiell* role of revolution and, moreover, violence in “Über konkrete Philosophie” and “Repressive Tolerance?”

As previously mentioned, the radical act plays a central role in Marcuse’s theory. Further, it aims to change both the individual and society. Thus the radical act, in comparison to just the act, occurs in two spheres, in knowledge and consciousness and in the social matrix. It liberates one from false consciousness and the resultant mental dependency as well from material social oppression. The simple act, however, only affects one side of this binary, the social. Viewing then Heidegger’s notion of the “facticity” of “thrownness” as socially regulated, the radical act that alters the individual for Marcuse has the potential to alter society and is, in fact, the precondition thereof. In light of the social characteristic of existence that Marcuse saw in Heidegger’s notion of inauthentic Dasein, it becomes clearer why Marcuse thought Marx and Heidegger would make less than strange bedfellows. After all, as Marcuse states in “Über konkrete Philosophie,” “Die sozialen Ordnungen, die wirtschaftlichen Gebilde, die politischen Gestaltungen machen mit das [sic] Geschehen des Daseins aus und müssen von dieser Existenz aus gesehen werden” (391). The nature of existence, therefore, cannot be abstracted from the social and political conditions under which it exists. Although Heidegger and Marx do extol radical action, the revolutionary characteristic of the latter does have the upper hand in Marcuse’s theory. The difference lies in the outcome of the radical act. For Heidegger this arguably leads to fascism and for Marx social revolution. It should be noted, however, that nowhere in *Sein und Zeit* does Heidegger

mention revolution. If Marcuse gets his notion of the radical individual and social *existentiell* act in part from Heidegger, then his notion of revolution certainly stems from Marx.

Awakening the individual to his authentic, autonomous potential is merely half of the equation. In “Über konkrete Philosophie” as in “Repressive Tolerance” this becomes the goal of philosophy, which results in Marcuse’s call for slanted tolerance to break the stranglehold of the majority over the individual. The result of this is revolution. Where Heidegger stops short in Marcuse’s eyes is following the dissolution of the inauthentic, dependent individual to its necessary conclusion. For Heidegger, the authentic individual is always the potential for one way of being (*Seinkönnen*). The result of the authentic individual, according to Heidegger, only deals with his relationship to others, not necessarily a change in the social structure itself, that is, a change in the predominant economic and political formations (Abromeit et. al. 143). In “Über konkrete Philosophie” Marcuse, however, makes it clear that such arenas are indeed the focus of his analysis. Following this, Marcuse is able to claim in “Repressive Tolerance” that the removal of tolerance from these particular arenas would mean revolution writ large “for they pertain to the basis on which the repressive affluent society rests and reproduces itself and its vital defenses” (“RT” 102). As such an integral part in the continuation of oppression by the majority, removal of tolerance as their weapon would necessarily lead to a backlash and, as Marcuse states, “surely, no government can be expected to foster its own subversion” (“RT” 100). Marcuse’s revolution is the extension of Heidegger into the world of Marx. Just as the proletariat, recognizing the means of production are not theirs, is the trigger of revolution, the re-authentication of the individual leads to the same result.

The role of violence in Marcuse, like that of revolution, is difficult to foresee in his reading of Heidegger. In fact, one could claim that as a Heideggerian, violence would play little to no role for Marcuse. Heidegger speaks of conscience (*Gewissen*) and care (*Sorge*) as being linked to authenticity. These terms, not only *prima facie* the direct opposite of violence, contain no trace of ethics or moral implication (Macdonald et. al. 31). According to Lambert Zuidervaat "...to the extent that an 'ought,' an 'obligation,' surfaces in Heidegger's account...it does not make me responsible for *doing* either what *is* right or what *others* say is right" (Macdonald et. al. 32, author's italics). The extent to which Heidegger's philosophy is absent of violence or the moral consequences thereof is testament in his aforementioned Holocaust statement, relating the victims of the Nazi gas chambers to food production. As was seen in chapter one, however, violence indeed plays an important part in Marcuse's analysis. Moreover, Marcuse recognizes that violence in any form is ethically despicable:

In terms of ethics, [revolutionary and reactionary] violence is inhuman and evil—but since when is history made in accordance with ethical standards? To start applying them at the point where the oppressed rebel against the oppressors, the have-nots against the haves is serving the cause of actual violence by weakening the protest against it ("RT" 103).

Marcuse's overall goal is the curtailment of violence as something inherently "evil."

Nevertheless, the outcome resulting from the liberation of the individual would necessarily lead to such circumstances. The majority that keeps the individual blissfully ignorant through the control of information and the couching of this ignorance under the banner of tolerance will not let its power simply slip away. Where this initiates reactionary violence from the ruling majority, only revolutionary violence can ensure the authenticity and autonomy of the individual and prevent society from returning to a state of total domination.

It is easy to see how Marcuse's theory could be viewed as a justification of violence, and to some extent, it certainly is. There is, however, a double bind. On the one hand, revolutionary and reactionary violence are negative dialectical opposites. Thus, Marcuse does not take a positive stance on either; both are equally deplorable. Reactionary violence reveals the current society as what it is, brutal and despotic. Revolutionary violence is simply the logical, albeit negative, outgrowth of the present situation of reactionary violence and oppression. Neither is to be taken as a positive, but as the unveiling of society's progression, or better regression, to a state of total violent domination. On the other hand, only the revolutionary subject can carry out revolutionary violence, those capable of the radical act. In this way, they achieve both a change in the structure of society and in human existence, paving the way for and safeguarding an autonomous, authentic existence. Marcuse resolves this double bind with philosophy. When both forms of violence are negated and revolutionary violence is placed in a situation where it cannot be realized in the historical present, Marcuse's philosophy not only becomes public, but violent in itself. Not only does his dialectic attack and modify two seemingly contradictory philosophical traditions, historical materialism and existential ontology, it also enters the public stage to attack the core of the individual, namely existence. Marcuse's philosophy not only does violence unto itself, but also, in its battle against "inauthenticity" and "false consciousness," does violence to the individual, tearing him away from delightful complacency of the majority, "the They." Concerning the former, Marcuse is indebted to Adorno's *Negative Dialektik*. As Adorno states in the concluding chapter of his book:

Tastet aber der Gedanke...dass der Andere ein ihm schlechthin  
Inkommensurables nennt, das er doch denkt, so findet er nirgends Schutz als  
in der dogmatischen Tradition. Denken ist in solchem Gedanken zu seinem  
Gehalt fremd, unverschönt, und findet sich aufs neue zu zweierlei Wahrheit

verurteilt, die mit der Idee des Wahren unvereinbar wäre. Metaphysik hängt daran, ob ohne Erschleichung aus dieser Aporie hinauszugelangen ist. Dazu muss Dialektik, in ein Abdruck des universalen Verblendungszusammenhangs und mit dessen Kritik, in einer letzten Bewegung sich noch gegen sich selbst kehren (ND 397).

“The hope of Adorno’s negative thinking,” Simon Jarvis states in *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, “is not to protect its own negativity but, in truth, to bring negativity to an end” (215). Moreover, Adorno’s negativity comes to this end by philosophy turning on itself, doing violence unto itself. For Marcuse, however, the end is not the dissolution of negativity through philosophy, but rather the production of a new philosophy indebted to this negativity. The philosophy that arises from Marcuse’s negative thinking is public, *existentiell* and social.

### The Frankfurt School and the Student Movement Revisited

Although close to four decades stand between “Über konkrete Philosophie” and “Repressive Tolerance,” a time that witnessed Germany’s decline into and recovery from a fascist regime, Marcuse’s entrance into the staunchly anti-Heideggarian Frankfurt School and the philosopher’s emigration to America, there are clear parallels between the two essays. The emphasis on the “inauthenticity” of the individual, the omnipresent power of the majority through the control of thought and information, as well as the radical act, revolution, and the public role of the philosopher are concepts that bridge these two works temporally and philosophically. Marcuse’s negative synthesis of his two main influences, Marx and Heidegger, in “Über konkrete Philosophie” reappears in his controversial essay “Repressive Tolerance.” Returning to Richard Wolin’s question in the introduction to this chapter, it seems that Marcuse did indeed retain traces of his Heideggarian heritage, which would make



the label “Left Heideggarian” all the more pertinent. Judging by the fact, however, that Marcuse’s main concern remained revolution, a concrete change in the oppressive structure of the dominant society, the term “*Existentiell* Marxist” is more fitting.

The fact that Marcuse retained traces of his Heideggarian roots opens another realm from which to view his relationship with the students and Horkheimer and Adorno. The reemergence of these central ideas, authenticity/autonomy, tolerance, and the role of the philosopher, from his time in Freiburg in “Repressive Tolerance” represent a philosophical break that always existed with his former colleagues. That is not to say, however, that Marcuse discarded the dialectic, which is the hallmark of not only his theory but of the Frankfurt School overall. The distinction between subject and object, theory and praxis, in short an anti-identity theory, is prevalent throughout Marcuse’s treatise. Though Marcuse extolled the collapse of this dualism in his early days with Heidegger, and to a lesser extent carried this over to his work with the school, “Repressive Tolerance” recognizes the dangers and shortcomings of a strict identity theory à la Heidegger. From the outset, Marcuse states, “that it is [the author’s] task to break the concreteness of oppression in order to open the mental space in which this society can be recognized as what it is and does” (“RT” 81-2). It is not Marcuse’s intention to combine theory with praxis but rather to use theory as a means to educate the populace, to divulge the contradictions and inherent oppression of the society in which it lives. Thus, Marcuse’s radical educational theory contains some similarities to his colleagues’ pedagogical approach. Likewise, insofar as Marcuse lays out the path to break this domination, from intolerance toward destructive ideas and ideologies to violent revolution, he nevertheless maintains the limitations of such praxis. Where pure tolerance aids in creating and perpetuating false consciousness, that is, the acceptance of reality as it is

through the mediation of thought, any praxis emanating from this system is destructive and repressive. “The safe distance between ideology and action,” asserts Marcuse, “repressive thought and repressive action [...] is dangerously shortened” (“RT” 111). Marcuse’s notion of theory leading to any praxis other than destruction presupposes the autonomous individual, which does not exist. The individuals themselves, according to him, have become the “subject-object” of the repressive system, their “‘pure’ thought has become a matter of *political education* (or rather: counter-education)” (“RT” 112, author’s italics). Marcuse’s “political education” is nothing more than a regurgitation of the established facts and accepted thought that claims to be “radical criticism” and “intellectual subversion” (“RT” 112). To Marcuse, the structure of the current society has led to the Heideggarian collapse of the subject/object dialectic, a point that he makes at length in his most well-known book *The One-dimensional Man*. The disintegration of this dualism results in both the continuation of the prevalent forms of oppression as well as the inability of the individual to recognize the system for what it is.

Where the methodology of “Repressive Tolerance” was not attacked by his former colleagues, one key philosophical aspect was, namely the Heideggarian concept of the autonomous individual. In *Jargon of Authenticity* Adorno sharply critiques Heidegger’s magnum opus, *Sein und Zeit*. As the introduction to this chapter showed, the central critique was that of his strict identity theory. Though this is not applicable to Marcuse’s essay, his argument against Heidegger’s concept of authenticity is. According to Adorno:

Heidegger instituted authenticity against the they and against small talk, without deluding himself that there could be a complete leap between the two types of existentials that he deals with....But he did not foresee that what he named authentic, once become word, would grow toward the same exchange society anonymity against which *Sein und Zeit* rebelled (JA 18).

While Adorno, on the one hand, grants that Heidegger did in fact realize the distinction is constantly in flux “because of their own dynamism,” the danger is in the adaptability of the authentic individual. Once authentic, there is no need to proceed further; the individual again becomes complacent with his surroundings. In *Dialektik der Aufklärung* both Adorno and Horkheimer posit the necessity of depicting the fragmentation of the world precisely to combat the diabolical, omnipresent complacent totality of the *Kulturindustrie*. Heidegger’s authenticity directly counters this. In fact, it makes the individual a better consumer of what the *Kulturindustrie* has to sell:

Through their [authenticity] they aspire...to put themselves forward as sharers in higher culture (to them old hats still sound modern) as well as individuals with an essence of their own.... They seem to guarantee that one is not doing what in fact he is doing—bleating with the crowd....The formal gesture of autonomy replaces the content of autonomy (JA 18).

This same critique of Heidegger’s authentic individual, though written two years before “Repressive Tolerance,” can certainly be leveled against Marcuse’s concept of autonomy. Marcuse, however, recognizes this as well. For him, the danger lies not in the illusion of autonomy but in “non-conformity and letting go” which, he states, “leave the real engines of repression in the society intact” (“RT” 115). When autonomy leads to disinterest, the goal of changing society falls to the wayside. This indifference, according to Marcuse, “even strengthen[s] these engines by substituting the satisfactions of private and personal rebellion for a more than private and personal, and therefore more authentic, opposition” (“RT” 115). Echoing Adorno, the gesture of autonomy replaces its content. Even when the individual is autonomous, the danger remains that his actions are not.

To guard against the autonomous individual slipping into apathy, or indifferent contentment with the current repressive society, an authority is needed to decide which information should be disseminated, an educational dictatorship. This is the extreme

development of Marcuse's public role of the philosopher. Not only is the philosopher responsible for the return of the individual but for the safeguarding of him as well. Where Adorno, in a 1969 interview with *Der Spiegel*, states "Ich habe vor dem Ausdruck Elfenbeinturm gar keine Angst," this is unacceptable to Marcuse (FSS 621). Replying to Adorno, Marcuse writes, "Du weißt, dass wir einig sind in der Ablehnung jeder unvermittelten Politisierung der Theorie. Aber unser (alte) Theorie hat einen inneren politischen Gehalt, eine innere politische Dynamik, die heute mehr als zuvor zu einer konkreten philosophischen Position drängt" (FSS 2: 649). It is not enough for Marcuse to sit on the sidelines, much less in an ivory tower, and observe as possible revolutionary events transpire. At the same time, he does not preach the bridging of theory and praxis. Nevertheless, philosophy has the duty to enter the fight. It can bring about the autonomous individual and aid him in remaining so. To be sure, Marcuse appears to want the best of both worlds and to be guilty himself of collapsing the dialectic. His theory wants to remain such but enter the public realm as praxis while, at the same time, remaining theory. The question then becomes: to what extent is theory simultaneously a form of praxis but does not discard the dialectic? There is little doubt that Adorno preserves the dialectic, though his remark in *Negative Dialektik* whereby philosophy turns on itself becoming self-destructive echoes Marcuse's call for a theory that is praxis. For Adorno and Marcuse alike, theory and praxis are closely related. Quoting Adorno, Alex Demirović states "dass Theorie als Theorie 'Statthalter von Freiheit' ist und Denken über sich hinaus ins Offene weist. Theorie ist Praxis, die Praxis überwindet" (FSS 3: 90). Where Adorno's negative dialectics is aimed at overcoming its own praxis, Marcuse's theory is praxis that overcomes premature violent revolutionary praxis. The difference lies in the concrete public nature of Marcuse's theory.

Adorno's remains in the hands of the consumed and often perplexed reader, while Marcuse's takes to the streets.

Marcuse's controversial philosophy, inspired by the equally provocative Heidegger, is cause as well for his shaky relationship with the students. In his analysis of Marcuse's early work with Heidegger, Hans-Jürgen Krahel, leader of the Frankfurt SDS and student of Adorno, attacks both Marcuse's notion of the radical act and the revolutionary subject. He states, "Mit dem Begriff der 'radikalen Tat' wird die revolutionären Praxis einem voluntarischen Subjekt zugeordnet" (109). For Krahel, Marcuse's notion of the autonomous, self-determining individual undermines the students' role as possible revolutionaries. That the individual must first be capable of revolution ignores the historical circumstances where a group, the students for example, is already in the midst of revolutionary circumstances. Pointing to this "flaw" in Marcuse's reasoning, Krahel states, "Die hilflosen und ohnmächtigen Objekte der Notwendigkeit können sich nur zu historischen Subjekte erheben, indem sie sich zu freiwilligen Vollstrecker des Geschichtsablaufs machen" (110). This attacks the role of the students Marcuse speaks of in his Berlin lecture "Über das Problem der Gewalt." Here he claims that the revolutionary subject, the oppressed of the third world, must first be brought to their revolutionary potential. This is the role of the students, to aid in this transition. Thus, Marcuse bars the students from the radical, revolutionary act. They are autonomous insofar as they can facilitate the rebirth of the revolutionary subject. By virtue of their intellectual nonconformity, they are capable of the "act" (*Tat*) which can change societal conditions (*Umstände*), but not the "radical act" that alters human existence (*menschliche Existenz*). As Marcuse stated during a speech on "Marx und die Revolution" in 1968:

Wenn dieser Prozess ohne Veränderung der subjektiven Bedingungen begonnen hat, besteht die Gefahr, dass die Alte nur mit einigen Verbesserungen beibehalten wird. Das könnte zwar schon ein Fortschritt sein, man sollte es jedenfalls nicht als geringfügig hinstellen, aber es ist sicherlich nicht der Beginn einer sozialistischen Gesellschaft als einer qualitativen anderen Lebensform (*FSS* 2: 455).

The “progress” that the students are capable of enacting only goes as far as the social realm, while the overall goal for Marcuse is “a qualitatively different form of life,” a change in the human existence. Though Marcuse grants the students an integral part in the preparation for revolution, they are still within the “perverted world” and the revolution must come from outside (“RT” 112). Conversely, where the students are autonomous, those outside the confines of the advanced industrial society are not but can become so and by virtue of their “outside” position can enact revolution proper.<sup>11</sup> Krahel fails to understand the *existentiell* nature of the revolutionary subject. The ruling majority has oppressed this side of the individual through the control of thought so that the revolutionary potential must again be realized. This is an *existentiell* change in the individual. No longer is one’s social class automatically a revolutionary characteristic. “The forces of emancipation,” writes Marcuse, “cannot be identified with any social class....Today, they are hopelessly dispersed throughout society...” (“RT” 112).

The mass of students at the height of the German protests of the sixties were not ready to cede their revolution to others nor were they able to cede to the force of dialectic negativity in Marcuse’s thought. To the students, the proletariat had failed to take its proper place on the revolutionary stage and it was now their turn. Looking for guidance, they turned

---

<sup>11</sup> An argument can be made for the geographic disposition of the new revolutionary subject. Though to some extent, Marcuse admits the students are outside of the traditional society (see chapter one pp.15-16), they clearly do not have the same geographic distance as the third world. Outside must, then, be understood on two levels, outside society while remaining within the geographical boundaries and outside in the true sense of from a considerable distance.

to the one member of the Frankfurt School who was willing to help. They did not, however, realize that Marcuse's ideas, seasoned with Heideggarian concepts, would demand from them something they were not willing to give, their place in the revolution. Theirs was "abstract emancipation," freeing from false consciousness, not the radical act, not revolution. Where for Adorno, this act can only occur through philosophy and art, to which *Negative Dialektik* and *Dialektik der Aufklärung* are both testament, Marcuse bestows this in part to the students in a quasi grass-roots philosophical campaign to awaken the sleeping masses. The students' premature turn to violence then, in philosophical terms, only served to perpetuate the power of the majority, "the They," that controls the populace. Where revolutionary violence can ensure the autonomous individual, when carried out before the majority is confronted with what it says and does through skewed tolerance the autonomous individual returns to suffer under the prevailing system. As long as the majority's ideas are accepted as fact, the result of tolerance, the individual is subject to these norms. Transgressing them only affirms the "truth" of the pre-established facts and the power of the majority. Unless the students attacked the prevailing thought and norms of the system aiding in the autonomy of the true revolutionaries, they were, according to Marcuse, only strengthening the hand wrapped tightly around their movement.

Marcuse's negative reception by both the students and his former colleagues can be seen on two levels, radical politics and radical philosophy. To Adorno and Horkheimer, on the one hand, Marcuse's radical ideas that he publicly shared with the students broke the critical distance that the two men upheld and shattered the negative dialectic. In their view, Marcuse was preaching theory to a group all too eager to turn it into praxis. To his former colleagues, Marcuse's dialectic was not negative enough. As Horkheimer writes in

“Marcuses Vereinfachung,” “[Marcuse] hat zwar Dialektik studiert, ja, sogar Bücher darüber geschrieben um jedoch für Intellektualität Reklame zu machen, ist nichts trivial genug” (*FSS* 2: 285). As a representative of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse’s radical ideas threatened the last vestiges of German critical theory whose importance had waned in the post-war years amidst the resurgence of French existentialism and authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Althusser and others. Adorno and Horkheimer feared guilt by association. Their friend and former colleague, propagating a theory of intolerance and violence to those who wished to enact such ideas, had betrayed them and jeopardized the legacy and possible continuation of the Frankfurt School. Though Marcuse made it clear in his writings and lectures to the students that his theory was not directly translatable into practice, the danger still remained in the eyes of Horkheimer and Adorno. On the other hand, to the students, Marcuse had failed to offer them a concrete solution. He denied them a view of a “positive utopia” as well as the position of revolutionary subject. Where Marcuse’s dialectic was not negative enough for Horkheimer and Adorno, to the students, it was not positive. To Marcuse, the students were a vital part of the revolutionary equation, but not the subject capable of enacting a revolution. At a time when their movement witnessed a drastic increase of reactionary violence, from the police who shot and killed student protestor Benne Ohnesorg to Josef Bachmann, the gunman who attempted to take the life of Rudi Dutschke, Marcuse told the students violence was not the answer. Only the true revolutionary subject could resort to violence to counter the brutal tactics of the oppressive government. To his colleagues of the Frankfurt School, Marcuse went too far. To the students he did not go far enough.

Marcuse’s radical political ideas were, however, not conceived in a vacuum. “Repressive Tolerance,” for all of its provocative and controversial concepts, was not simply



a product of the 1960s. The philosophical foundation of these ideas stretch back more than three decades, to a time when Marcuse studied under one of the most groundbreaking and controversial philosophers of his time, Martin Heidegger. While on the surface, it appears Adorno and Horkheimer disapprove of Marcuse's radical politics, which they certainly do, the roots reach much deeper. Marcuse's controversial ideas in "Repressive Tolerance" are a product of his modification of Heidegger. The public role of the philosopher, which Marcuse took on whole-heartedly is but the outward manifestation of his earlier influences. His concept of autonomy parallels his early work from the 1920s when he was attempting to fuse Heidegger's existential ontology with Marx's historical materialism. Moreover, Marcuse's view of the necessity of slanted tolerance and ideas to combat the dependency and complacency of the individual to the current societal structure is, in part, the result of Heidegger's concept of "the They," in whom the dependent individual becomes enmeshed, and their stranglehold on facts and thought. Both his former colleagues and the students failed to realize the extent to which these Heideggarian influenced concepts still dominated Marcuse's work, especially in "Repressive Tolerance." Adorno lost his 1933 gamble on Marcuse and the consequences thereof came into full view in the 1960s. Though neither Horkheimer nor Adorno broach this in their correspondence with or critique of Marcuse, it is clear from Adorno's work, particularly *Jargon of Authenticity* and his *Der Spiegel* interview from 1969, that he was firmly against such ideas as Heideggarian autonomy and the public philosopher. Marcuse's perceived role of the students stems as well from these concepts leading to a philosophical base for rejecting the students' claim to the revolution. If the true revolutionary subject, according to Marcuse, was the dependent individual lost in false consciousness and incapable of realizing his potential, then the students' role was to

“recreate” the mental space for preparing the ground for the reawakening of this subject. Where violence is concerned, only the depiction or critical representation of it, from the Kommune I flyers to the happenings, created such a mental space for reflection. Confronting the violent powers with visions of violence, to use Richard Langston’s term, swung the discourse to the side of the students, fulfilling Marcuse’s call for information and ideas slanted in the opposite direction and away from the majority that controls them.

Marcuse’s relationship between these two competing and opposing forces was dominated by two trends in his theory. On the one side, his radical political views and, on the other, his radical philosophy which strongly influenced the former. Understanding Marcuse’s position during the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, between the students and the remaining members of the Frankfurt School, demands an understanding of these two aspects in the formation of his theory. His confrontation with the Frankfurt School was driven by both his political and philosophical beliefs that, while not remaining stagnant during his career as a critical theorist, were largely indebted to his previous tutelage under Heidegger. To be sure, Marcuse was neither an existentialist nor a Heideggarian. Nevertheless, he was unable to completely shed this influence that lingered throughout his career. This philosophical, political heritage made him simultaneously the “guru” of the student movement and a mystery. The issues the students had with Marcuse’s less than satisfactory answers stem from these two seemingly competing forces in his theory, Marxism and Heidegger’s existential philosophy. The preconditions Marcuse placed upon their movement were unacceptable and met with both criticism and disenchantment. Marcuse’s radical political philosophy set him on his own pedestal, a pedestal between a rock and a hard place.

### Areas for Further Research

The goal of this thesis has been to shed light on Marcuse's relationship with his former colleagues in the Frankfurt School, Horkheimer and Adorno, and the students during the protest decade of the 1960s. I have demonstrated both that the problems between Marcuse and these two groups arise from his radical politics and his radical philosophy influenced in large part by Martin Heidegger. This, however, is not the end of the story and by no means nails the coffin shut on the question of Herbert Marcuse's legacy not only during the 1960s but also into the 1970s and beyond. There are many interesting and crucial areas to illuminate that are outside the scope of this present project. I will mention a few of these to give a direction for further research into Marcuse's philosophy.

One of the main questions for exploration is that of Marcuse's understanding and use of the dialectic. This is given but a cursory treatment in this thesis and could open a new door in our understanding of Marcuse and his relationship with his contemporaries. To this end, Hegel enters the frame. Marcuse's first book *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit*, published in 1932, in fact dealt specifically with Hegel. Moreover, Marcuse wrote numerous essays on the subject of the dialectic from 1930 on into the 1960s. His understanding of Hegel and the dialectic could provide yet another critical aspect of the differences between his theory and methodology and that of Horkheimer and Adorno. The extent to which Marcuse employs the dialectic and to what end adds as well another dimension to his view of the student movement and their understanding of him.

On the heels of the dialectic question comes as well the problem of Marcuse's possible reification of consciousness, the similarity to Benjamin and Adorno's vehement

critique thereof. For Adorno, in the subject/object dialectic the object clearly has priority.<sup>12</sup>

Marcuse's writings in the late 1960s and early 1970s are clearly invested in a new subjectivity and consciousness raising involving sex, drugs, art and music. Is Marcuse's emphasis on subjectivity and consciousness raising, and Benjamin's alike, then a hypostatization of the subject to the point of reification? Is this as well a point of contention between Marcuse and Adorno as it was for Benjamin and Adorno? Like the question of Marcuse's dialectic, the question of reification reaches deeper into Marcuse's philosophy. By analyzing the roots thereof we can come to a better understanding of the controversial and often misunderstood philosopher. As Wolfgang Kraushaar writes:

Das inzwischen übliche Klischee lautet:  
Herbert Marcuse - ein im übrigen nicht ganz unsympathischer Mann - war ein Zick-Zack-Philosoph, der sich den Irrungen und Wirrungen seiner bewegten Zeit hingegeben hat. Er dachte mal dies und mal das, er war das, was man einen neomarxistischen Eklektizisten und Subjektivisten nennt. Ein Denker aus einer verworrenen Zeit, mit dessen Theorien sich genauer auseinanderzusetzen kaum noch lohnen kann (*FSS* 3: 196).

To be sure, in the last few decades, Marcuse scholarship has again come to the fore. Marcuse is no longer the taboo intellectual he once was. Nevertheless, there is much to be done and many areas of his philosophy yet to be investigated. I hope that this thesis has begun to open a new discourse on Marcuse, one that will continue, thrive and illuminate a philosophical career that was once playfully brushed aside.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Adorno, "Zu Subjekt und Objekt," pp. 746-749 as well as Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 182-3.

## Bibliography

- Abromeit, John and Cobb, Mark W., eds. *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 10.2: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- . *Jargon of Authenticity*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.
- . *Negative Dialektik*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975.
- Arato, Andrew and Gebhardt, Eike, eds. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. New York: Continuum, 1982.
- Briegleb, Klaus. 1968: *Literatur in der antiautoritären Bewegung*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1993.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.
- Dekoven, Marianne. *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Dreyfus, Hubert. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time," Division I*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
- Dutschke, Rudi. *Die Revolte: Wurzeln und Spuren eines Aufbruchs*. Göttingen: Dutschke, Jürgen Miermeister und Jürgen Treulieb, eds. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983.
- . *Geschichte ist machbar: Texte über das herrschende Falsche und die Radikalität des Friedens*. Jürgen Miermeister, ed. Berlin: Wagenbach, 1980.
- . *Mein Langer Marsch: Reden, Schriften und Tagebücher aus Zwanzig Jahren*. Göttingen: Dutschke-Klotz, Helmut Gollwitzer und Jürgen Miermeister, eds. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980.
- Habermas, Jürgen, ed. *Antworten auf Herbert Marcuse*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1968.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1935.
- Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1988.

- Hubert, Martin. *Politisierung der Literatur - Ästhetisierung der Politik*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1992.
- Inwood, Michael. *A Heidegger Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999
- Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Jay, Martin. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973.
- Kellner, Douglas. "The Frankfurt School Revisited: A Critique of Martin Jay's 'The Dialectical Imagination,'" *New German Critique* 4 (1975), 131-152.
- . *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- . *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Krahl, Hans-Jürgen. *Konstitution und Klassenkampf: Zur historischen Dialektik von bürgerlicher Emanzipation und proletarischer Revolution. Schriften, Reden und Entwürfe aus den Jahren 1966-1970*. Frankfurt a.M.: Neue Kritik, 1971.
- Kraushaar, Wolfgang von, ed. *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotov Cocktail 1946 bis 1995 Bd. 2 Dokumente*. Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard Verlag, 1998.
- . *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung: Von der Flaschenpost zum Molotov Cocktail 1946 bis 1995 Bd. 3 Aufsätze und Register*. Hamburg: Rogner & Bernhard Verlag, 1998.
- Langston, Richard. *Visions of Violence: German Avant-Gardes After Fascism*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007.
- Macdonald, Iain and Ziarek, Krzysztof, eds. *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- . *Five Lectures*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.
- . *Heideggerian Marxism*. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit, eds. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

- . *Nachgelassene Schriften Bd. 4: Die Studentenbewegung und ihre Folgen*. Peter-Erwin Jansen, ed. Hamburg: Klampen Verlag, 2004.
- . *Schriften Bd. 1*. Frankfurt a.M.: Surhkamp, 1978.
- . *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse Vol. 3*. Douglas Kellner, ed. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Negt, Oskar. *Achtundsechzig: Politische Intellektuelle und die Macht*. Göttingen: Steidl, 1995.
- Ott, Hugo. *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*. London: HarperCollins, 1993.
- Pippin, Robert, Feenberg, Andrew and Webel, Charles P., eds. *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*. London: Macmillian, 1988.
- Schneider, Peter. *Ansprachen: Reden, Notizen, Gedichte*. Berlin: Wagenbach, 1970.
- Wiggershaus, Rolf. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.
- Wolff, Robert Paul, Moore, Barrington Jr. and Marcuse, Herbert. *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Boston: Beacon, 1965.
- Wolin, Richard. *Heideggers Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- . *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.